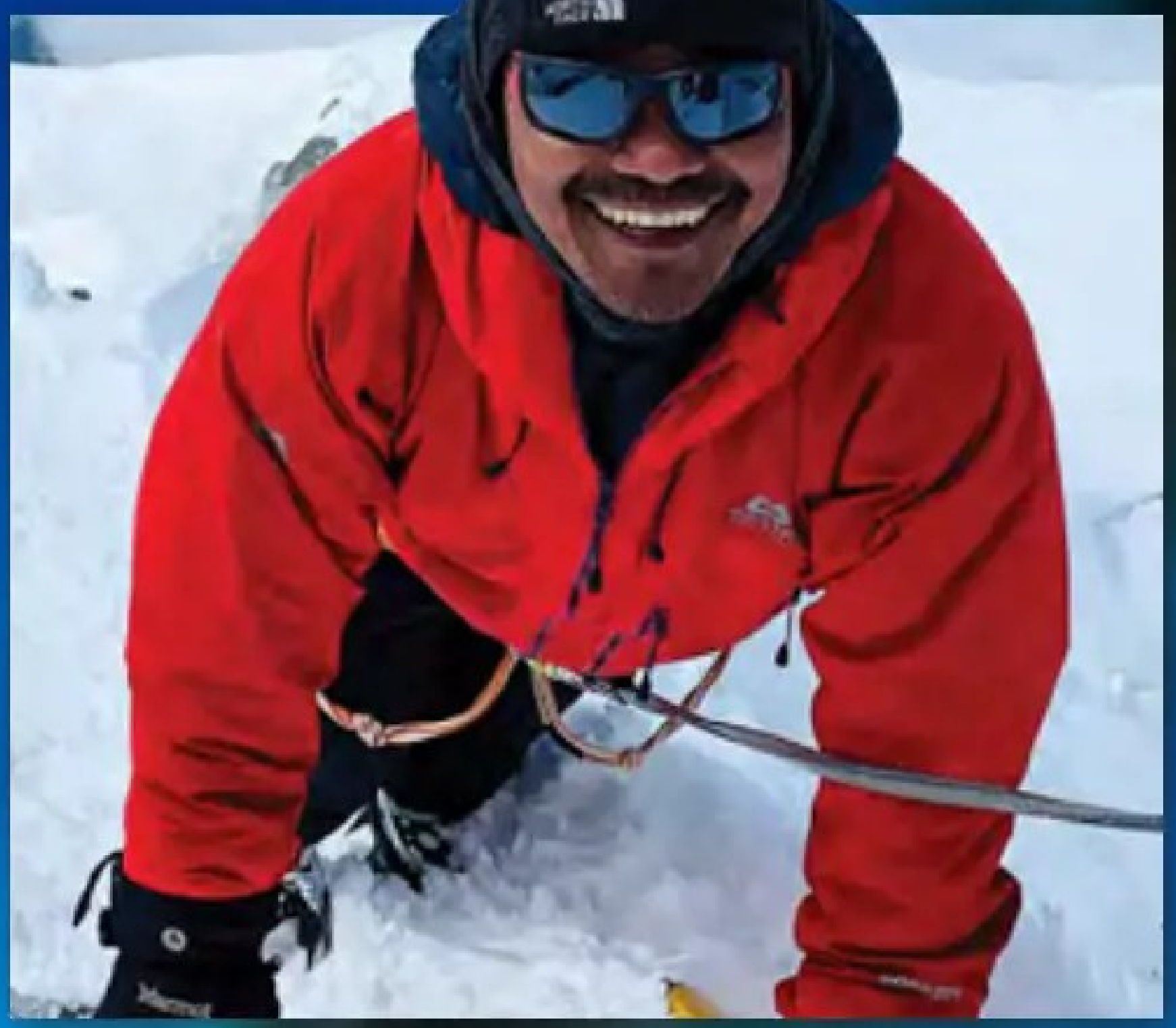
REVEALED: CAN WE IDENTIFY THE VC'S MYSTERY RECIPIENT?

BRITAIN'S BEST-SELLING MILITARY MONTHLY

BRITAIN AT WAR

ISSUE
213

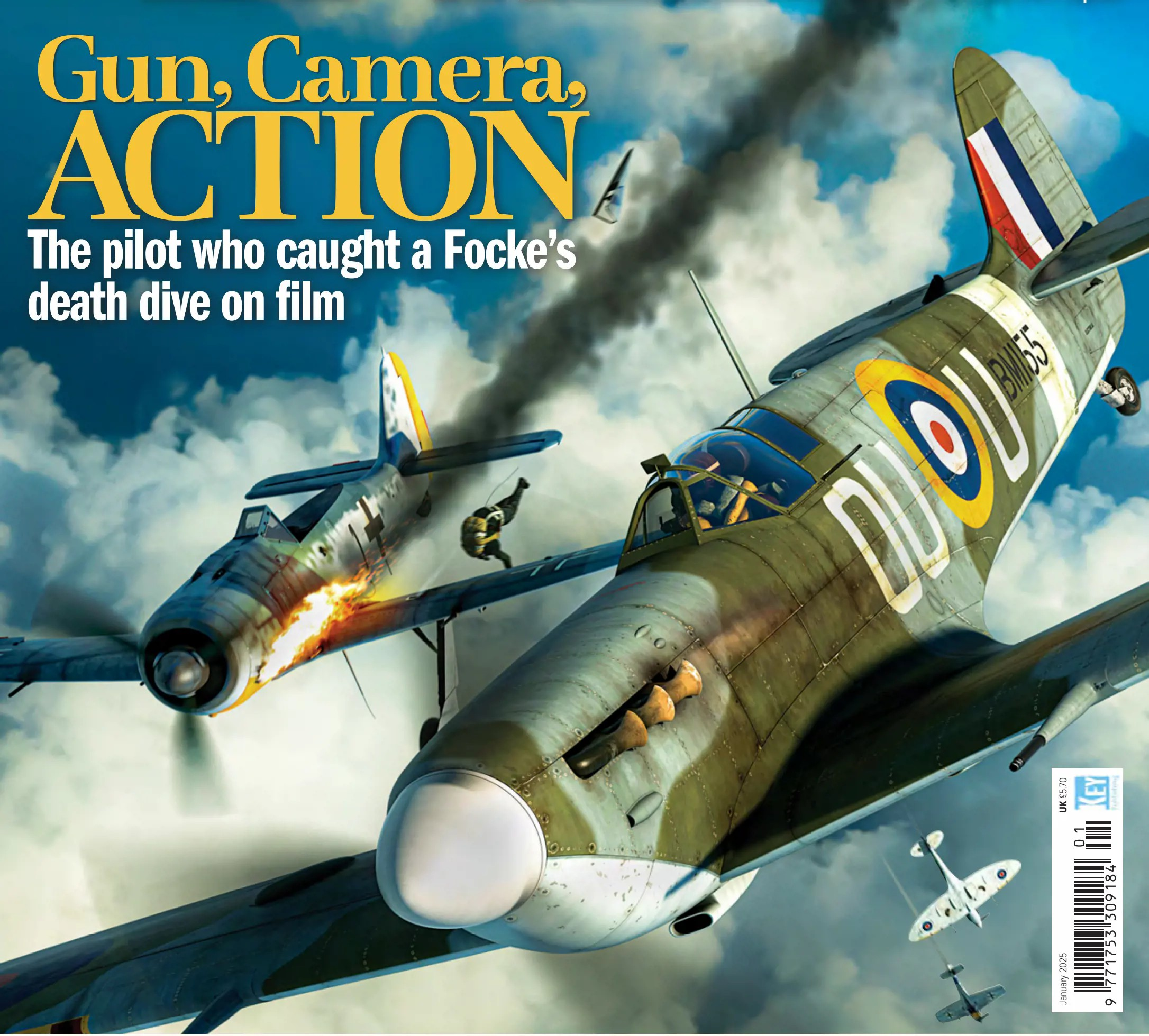


AIN'T NO MOUNTAIN HIGH ENOUGH

Gurkha MBE's Everest exploit

Gun, Camera, ACTION

The pilot who caught a Focke's death dive on film



Dreadnought revolution

How the Royal Navy's first nuclear-powered submarine assured underwater dominance

Baron in battle

How D-Day experiences shaped one of Britain's greatest war novels

Pacific premiere

The forgotten debut of New Zealand's fledging air force

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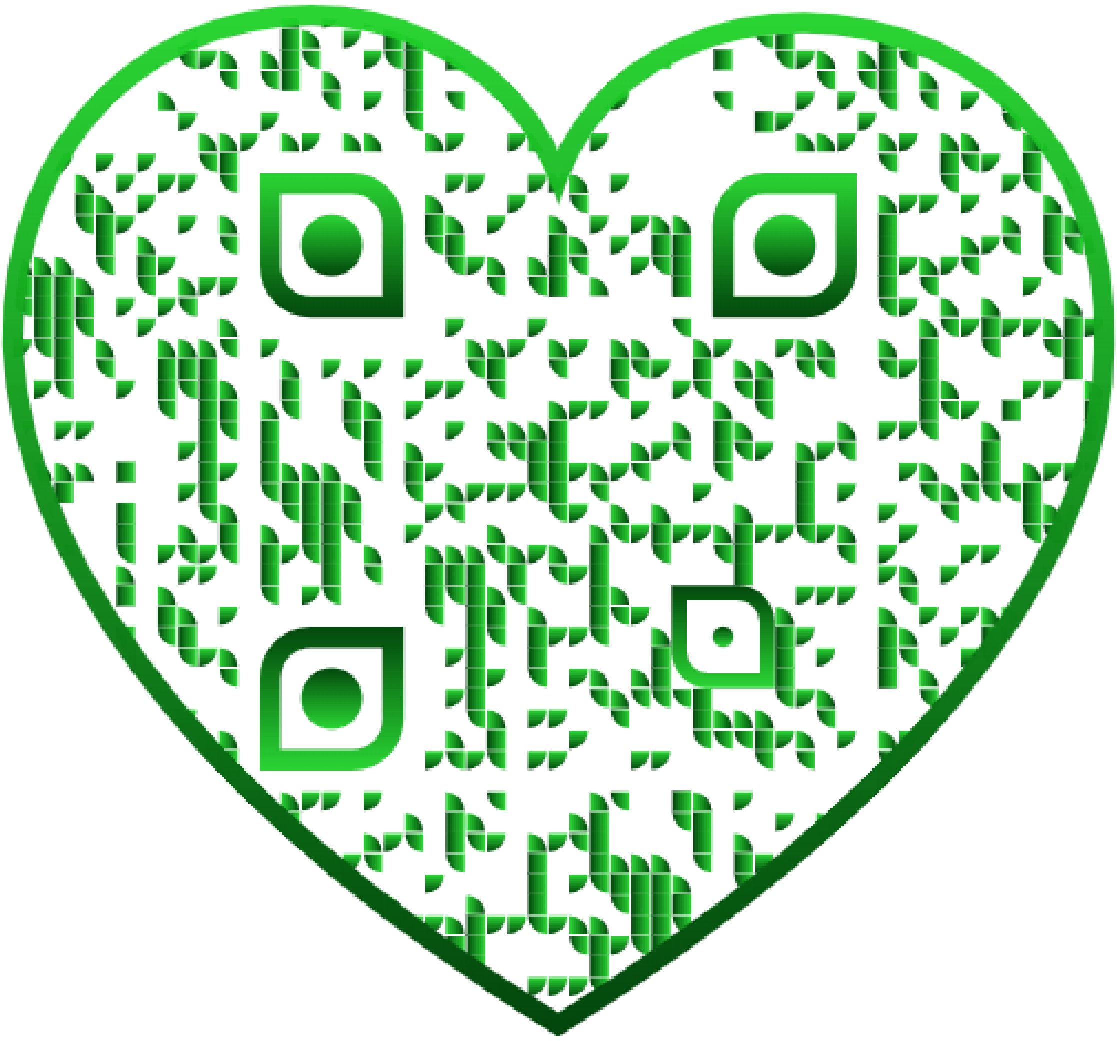

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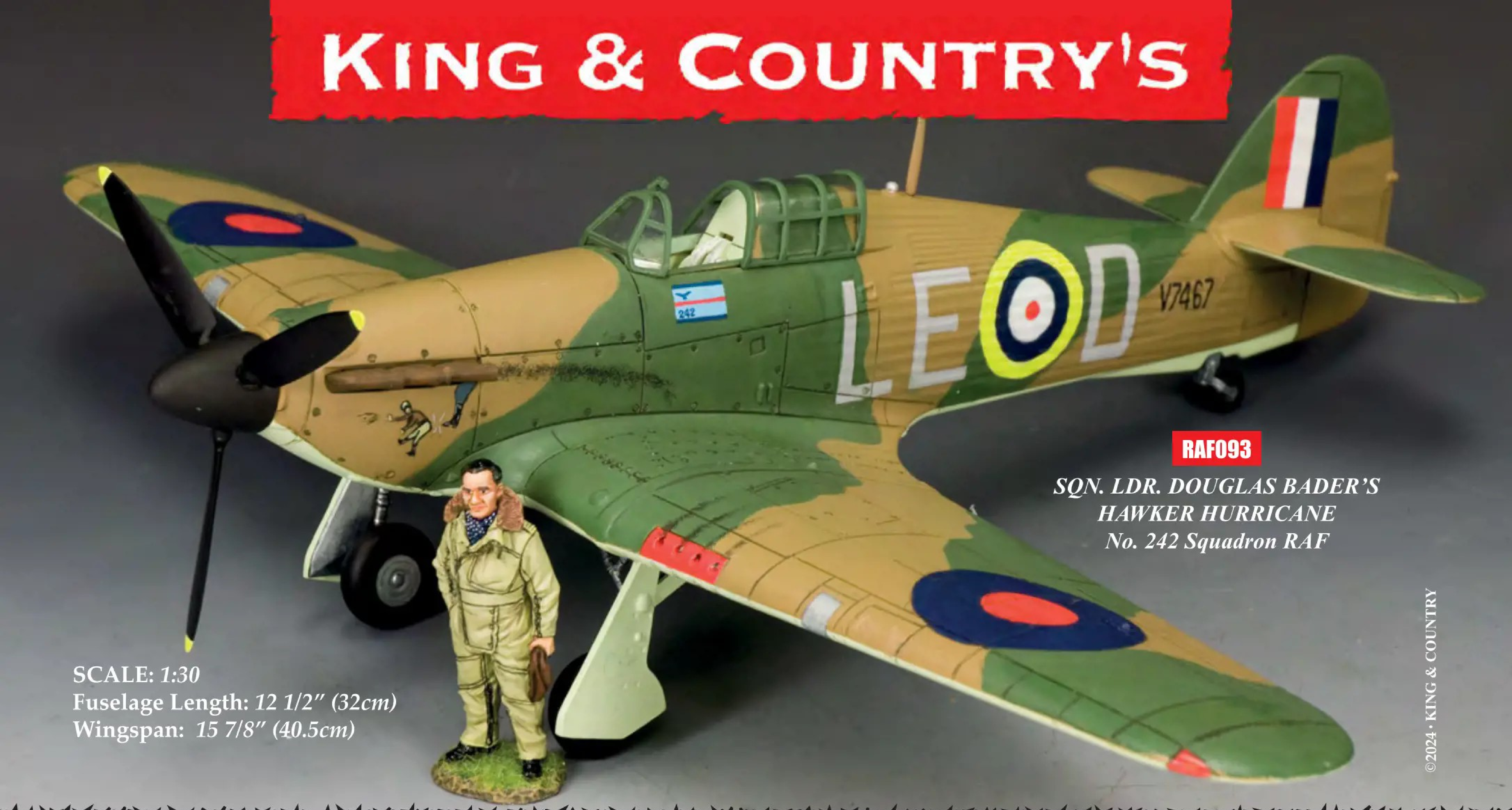

RAF093

SQN. LDR. DOUGLAS BADER'S
HAWKER HURRICANE
No. 242 Squadron RAF

SCALE: *1:30*
Fuselage Length: *12 1/2″ (32cm)*
Wingspan: *15 7/8″ (40.5cm)*

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Hurricane Aces

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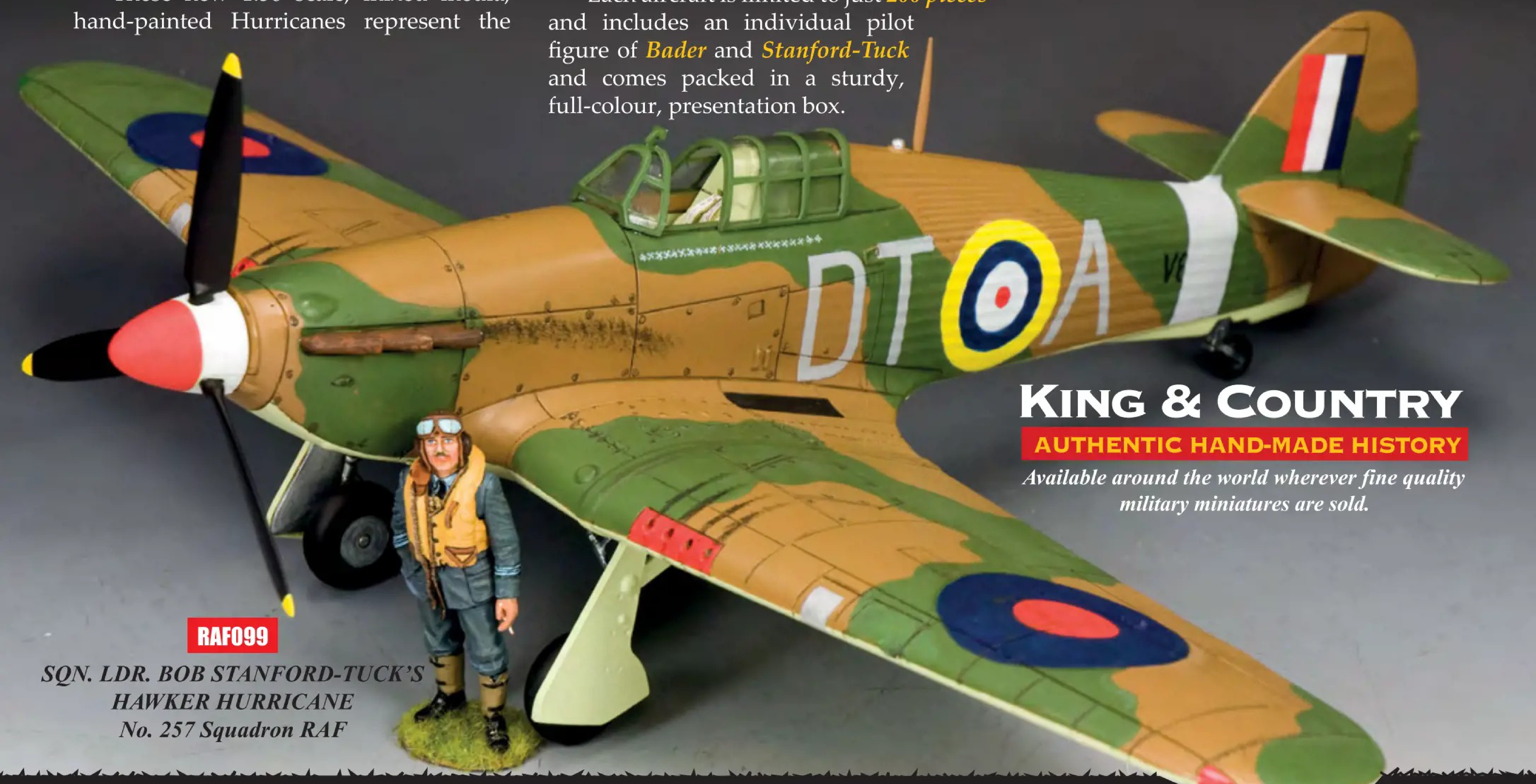

RAF099

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HAWKER HURRICANE
No. 257 Squadron RAF

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From the Editor

Riflemen of the 290th (US) Infantry Regiment defend their position in fresh snowfall near Amonines, Belgium, during the Battle of the Bulge. While seen as an 'American' battle, the huge action in the Ardennes also involved tens of thousands of British troops US ARMY

Welcome to the first issue of 2025, especially to those of you who, thanks to an excellent Christmas present, are first-time readers and subscribers. Unfortunately, the new year does mean that the annual price rise is on the horizon. So, let's cut a deal… I'll maintain the quality editorial content you are accustomed to, and encourage you to consider a money-saving subscription. See page 21 to secure the best value for your hard-earned cash!

As I write this, I can see snow fall from the window. We're fortunate that for most of us in Britain today, snow is just an inconvenience. Go back 80 years and to the Ardennes Forest, and things were different. We often think of Burma's jungle or Libya's desert as inhospitable – and they were – but it is easy to forget how bitter winters here can be. Winter 1944 was coldest in European history at the time, blizzards could quickly deposit feet of snow and millions of soldiers were exposed to the cold, trying to keep their feet dry and warm as their hair froze. The white stuff betrayed movements by leaving tracks and was also an obstacle, slowing infantry, creating noise as they picked their way forward. Ice could even prevent tanks from moving.

So, when, on December 16, 1944, Germany sprung a major offensive through the Ardennes, the stage was set for a brutal action in no way made easier by the weather – in fact, that was the point, the Germans anticipating that poor conditions would ground Allied airpower. Marking the 80th anniversary of the Battle of the Bulge, I examine a forgotten engagement in which British paratroopers were locked into some of the heaviest combat of the war, grappling with Tiger I tanks and two feet of snow as they moved into Bure.

Snow and cold are familiar to Hari Budha Magar MBE, who talked to Phil Loder, giving an inspirational interview. The veteran Gurkha, who lost his legs in Afghanistan, has since summited Mount Everest. He speaks powerfully about his experiences, recovery, record-breaking, the stigma of disability and why he decided to climb the world's toughest mountains.

Michael Haskew gets about as far from Everest's heights as you can in his deep dive on Britain's first nuclear submarine. Despite its short service life, HMS *Dreadnought* was an impressive hunter-killer that set the Royal Navy along a path it continues to sail today. Moreover, 45 years after decommissioning, she survives… perhaps there is a reason why Britain's oldest nuclear submarine is not among the first four to be dismantled?

In *Hero of the Month*, Lord Ashcroft believes he can finally identify a man who earned the Victoria Cross for a daring Crimean War raid. We do not have an image of him – nor really know his true name – but thanks to two Scandinavian historians, we might well have discovered the unlikely origins of the VC's mystery man. And, if you've enjoyed our recent forays into the war experiences of famous authors, then Melody Foreman examines that of D-Day veteran and war novelist Alexander Baron.

Last, but certainly not least, the Spitfire – a British icon, much-loved and still celebrated today. In his debut *BAW* feature, John Stackhouse presents a fascinating tale of a single airframe with extraordinary history. Sadly, BM155 does not survive today, but across almost a century of operational sorties, this remarkable Spitfire and its many pilots produced some of the most recognisable gun camera stills of the entire war – which, with a little artistic licence have lent themselves to create this issue's stunning artwork – and met King George VI.

Enjoy!

John Ash, Editor

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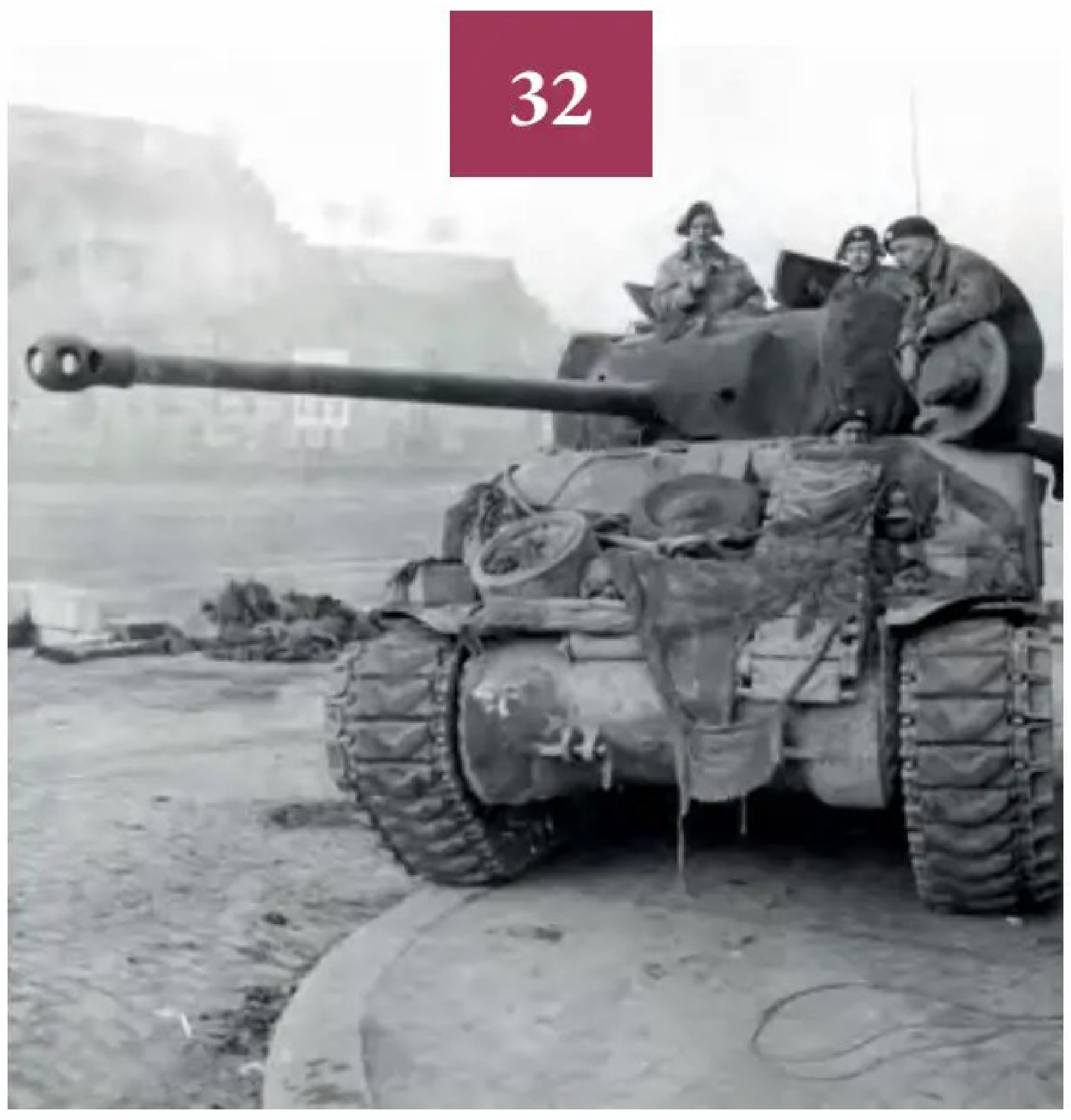

CONTENTS

FEATURES

22

FROM BRUM TO BRILLIANCE

John Stackhouse profiles Spitfire Mk.Vb BM155, an airframe that met King George VI, participated in almost 100 sorties and captured some incredible gun camera footage

32

BITTER BURE

The quaint Belgian village of Bure was the scene of some of the fiercest fighting during the Battle of the Bulge. John Ash follows the advance of Britain's 13th Parachute Battalion

44

MAU MONITOR

Andrew Thomas charts the forerunner of the Royal New Zealand Air Force and its first independent operation against Mau rebels in the remote South Pacific

52

NO LEGS, NO LIMITS

Double amputee and Gurkha veteran Hari Budha Magar MBE chats with Phil Loder, and proves no mountain is too high when it comes to his recovery

62

GURKHAS, GUTS AND GLORY

Michael E Haskew unpicks the numbers behind the implacable Gurkhas, a fighting force that has forged a distinct relationship with the British Army

66

D-DAY'S MASTER STORYTELLER

Melody Foreman delves into the mind of a British author whose experiences during the D-Day landings shaped his classic trilogy of war novels

80

BRITAIN'S SECOND *DREADNOUGHT* REVOLUTION

Michael E Haskew profiles HMS *Dreadnought*, Britain's first nuclear-powered hunter-killer submarine, which ushered the Royal Navy into the atomic age, steering it toward underwater dominance

BRIEFINGS

6

FIRST FOR JCCC AS WAR GRAVES IDENTIFIED IN KOREA

The graves of four servicemen have been identified by the JCCC

8

SIR ROBERT 'BOM' GILLIES DIES

Thousands gathered to pay tribute to veteran Sir Robert 'Bom' Gillies, the last survivor of the 28th (Māori) Battalion

12

A GLIMPSE INTO THE PAST

The discovery of a time capsule aboard the minehunter HMS *Chiddingfold* has provided a glimpse into life on its wartime namesake

94

HERO OF THE MONTH

Lord Ashcroft profiles Leading Stoker William Johnstone VC, a sailor attributed with earning the second Victoria Cross, and believes he can finally reveal his true identity

22

COVER STORY

If there was such a thing as a forgotten icon, Spitfire BM155 would be closest to it. John Stackhouse traces the history the headline-grabbing aircraft responsible for securing some of the best-known gun camera footage of World War Two

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The forgotten debut of New Zealand's fledgling air force

Main image: Antonis Karidis
Design: Steve Diggle

REGULARS

16
DESPATCHES
Your auction update on medals, arms and armour, militaria and historic curios

18
DEBRIEF
A historian answers six common questions on the Jameson Raid

20
FIELDPOST
Readers' letters, views and feedback

40
COLLECTIONS
The City of Norwich Aviation Museum

50
IMAGE OF WAR
The Royal Navy's 'Submarine Cruiser'

75
AT EASE
The latest products of interest, including our review of season two of the hit BBC TV series *Rogue Heroes*

89
MILITARIA
Austin J Ruddy's round-up of collectables linked to London Underground shelters

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First for JCCC as British war graves ID'd in Korea

The graves of four soldiers killed in the Korean War have been identified by the MOD's Joint Casualty and Compassionate Centre (JCCC). The men – Major Patrick Angier and Sergeant Donald Northey of the 1st Gloucestershire Regiment, and Corporal William Adair and Rifleman Mark Foster of the Royal Ulster Rifles – were buried in the UN Memorial Cemetery in Busan and are the first unknown British soldiers from that conflict to be identified.

JCCC case lead Nicola Nash spent years researching soldiers' graves, compiling a list of the 300 still missing British servicemen, of whom 76 were buried in Busan. Nicola then examined casualty files at the National Archives, museum records and personal documents. Her conclusions were submitted to an independent MOD review board, which confirmed her findings.

Major Angier, aged 30, and 23-year-old Sergeant Northey had seen action in World War Two, but were killed on the same day during the Battle of the Imjin River in April 1951.

As CO of 'A' Company on Point 148 – 'Castle Hill' – Angier and his unit bore the brunt of the Chinese People's Volunteer Army (PVA) attack on the night of April 22-23. The following morning, while consolidating his men for withdrawal to Hill 235, Angier was killed. Northey was serving in a mortar platoon and on April 24 was tasked with ferrying ammunition up to the line. While successful in delivering the supplies before the road was cut off, Northey's unit was ordered to withdraw to Hill 235 and he was killed during the retreat.

Corporal Adair, 21, and Rifleman Foster, 40, had also fought in World War Two, but were recalled to the 1st Royal Ulster Rifles following the outbreak of war in Korea in August 1950. On New Year's Day 1951, the PVA launched a surprise assault against UN positions, forcing the British 29th Infantry Brigade to hold 12 miles northwest of Seoul. On January 3, the Chinese attacked the Ulster's positions, but they held until, overnight, the Ulstermen withdraw along a valley. However, UN aircraft mistakenly illuminated the column with flares; the Chinese opened fire and charged down with bayonets fixed. In the fierce close-quarters battle that ensued, Adair and Foster were killed.

A rededication service was held at the UN Memorial Cemetery on November 12, 2024. Each headstone received its new name and in attendance were relatives of the soldiers, including Sergeant Northey's son Michael, Major Angier's daughter and grandson, Tabby and Guy, and Corporal Adair's great-nephew, Cameron.

Speaking to *BAW,* Nicola said: "It is a fantastic feeling to be able to mark their final resting place. It was made even more poignant by having the families travel out with us to pay their respects and finally get closure. These men fought all through World War Two, and then answered their country's call again just a few years later. They made the ultimate sacrifice for freedom, and we will always remember them."

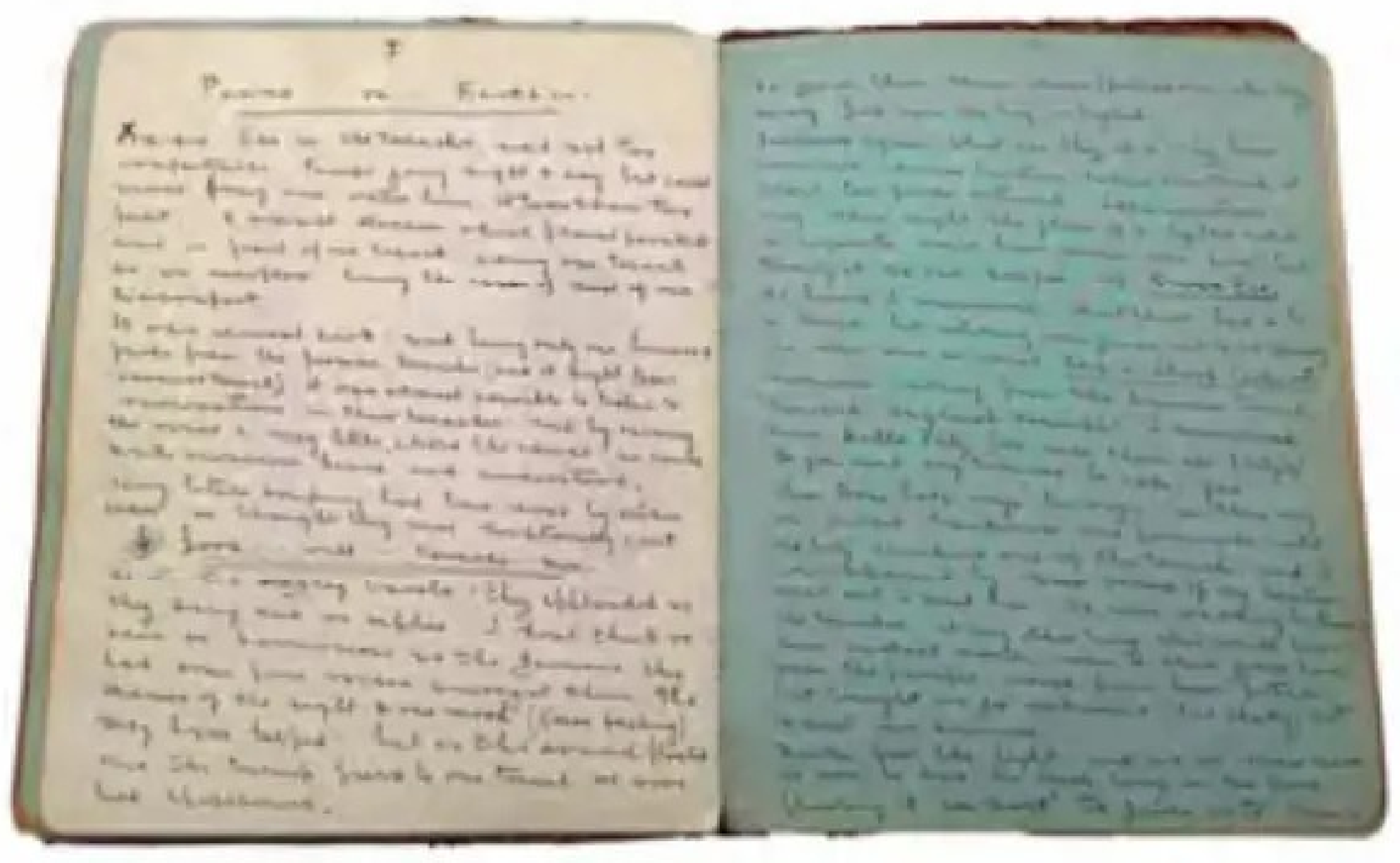
Major Angier's relatives, Tabby and Guy, give a reading during the service. Michael Northey and his wife are seated in the front row.
ALL IMAGES COURTESY OF THE JCCC

Lost album reveals 1914 Christmas Truce secrets

An unseen account of the 'Christmas Truce' has been discovered in a century-old nurse's photograph album. The memory was found during a house clearance among entries collected from wounded British servicemen. The album belonged to Voluntary Aid Detachment Nurse Maude Lineham, who encouraged her patients to write down their thoughts as a form of therapy.

Among entries from 90 soldiers is an eight-page, first-hand account of the Christmas Truce by Seaforth Highlander John Ferguson, who was wounded the day after celebrating Christmas with the enemy. He wrote: "Christmas Eve in the trenches and not too comfortable… It was almost dark and being only 100 yards from the German trenches, it was almost possible to listen to their conversations…"

He continued: "We started singing carols. They applauded us. They sang and we replied. They had some fine voices among them. We were spellbound. We gave them three cheers when they sang *God Save The King* in English. Quietness again. They had arranged Chinese



The eight-page account of the Christmas Truce within Nurse Lineham's preserved album
HANSONS AUCTIONEERS & VALUERS

New database charts Short Sunderland history

Aviation researchers have compiled a unique database tracing the history of the Short Sunderland and those involved with the flying boat's long service – in peacetime and during war.

Ken shows Chris (left) and John another of the photographs added to the digital archive MARTIN CAVANEY PHOTOGRAPHY

The database, to become part of the Pembroke Dock Heritage Centre Archive, is being assembled by Chris Osborne and John Evans. To date, more than 12,000 names have been listed alongside incidents involving hundreds of Sunderlands.

Chris's fascination with the Sunderland began when he inherited the flying logbook of his grandfather, Mal. Starting with tracing the stories of each Sunderland that Mal flew, and the men he flew with, the logbook expanded to include Sunderland losses, incidents, rescues and encounters with U-boats and German aircraft. John Evans' 40 years of research have also been added to the Heritage Centre Archive. He amassed a large collection of photographs, records and memorabilia on the flying boats.

The project has taken off with support from the Heritage Centre's Collections Team, particularly volunteer Ken Edwards. A former RAF serviceman, Ken is digitalising John's huge archive – so far, a seven-year-long project!

"The database is growing all the time," said Chris and John. "The Heritage Centre receives many enquiries relating to Sunderland and airmen. This database will offer opportunities to find out more about each aircraft and the individuals who played their parts in the long story of a famous aircraft."

RN team renamed in honour of Alan Turing

The Royal Navy Command Headquarters and the Royal Naval Historical Branch have approved the renaming of the Maritime C5ISR Support Unit (MCSU) Defensive Cyber Teams as Naval Party 1912 (NP1912), in honour of British codebreaker and computing pioneer Alan Turing OBE FRS.

Naval Parties are special units formed from Royal Navy personnel to fulfil defence commitments where it is not possible for them to be included on the Unit Establishment List of a ship, such as Naval Party 8901, the initial Falkland Islands garrison at the start of the 1982 conflict. NP1912 has taken its name from the year of Turing's birth and its personnel have been presented with a new patch and insignia.

NP1912 delivers intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance equipment and services across the Royal Navy. Its Cyber Protection Teams are responsible for providing cyber defence both at sea and ashore, with expertise including digital forensics, cyber threat intelligence, cyber analysis and systems engineering.

Commander Craig Devlin, MCSU CO, said: "This identity, built on a proud moment in our history, is a visceral reminder of the important work that our digital sailors and marines conduct on a day-to-day basis to keep us protected from cyber threats."

The Maritime C5ISR Support Unit's Cyber Protection Teams will now be known as NP1912 ROYAL NAVY

---

lanterns behind their trench – illuminations would have drawn fire any other night, but tonight, no one snipes.

"Someone called from the trenches 'Ongleesh Komradd'. We answered 'Fritz'. 'Do you want any tobacco'? they asked. 'Yes'. 'Then come halfway' they said. We called backwards and forwards until Old Fritz clambered out of the trench, and I, accompanied by another three, went out to meet them. We shook hands, wished each other a Merry Christmas and were soon talking like old pals, standing in front of their wire entanglements. Soon most of my company, hearing I had gone, followed us. What a sight it was, little groups of Germans and British extending the length of our front. Out of the darkness came much laughter and talking, lighted cigarettes and the flash of matches, and the exchange of souvenirs. Here we were laughing and talking to men whom only a few hours earlier we were trying to kill.

"They had arranged not to fire on us for 48 hours but warned us that the Prussians on their left would still snipe. They kept their word and neither of us fired for two days. It was a different world. Here we were, Christmas Day in the trenches, able to walk about with our heads above the trenches. Some of our men even left the trench to play football. A party went over and took photographs with the Germans. We had made friends with the enemy and all day kept calling and joking across the trenches."

Unfortunately, things did not pan out too well for Ferguson, who later wrote: "Dec 26. A shell struck me. Left arm was amputated at the elbow and shrapnel wound in the left thigh. I knew it was not our new friends, the Bavarians, who shot me, but the artillery of the Prussians."

The lot was auctioned by Hansons, where head of militaria Matt Crowson said: "This moving account underlines the futility of war..."

'Bom' Gillies, last Māori Battalion soldier, dies

Thousands gathered to pay tribute to Sir Robert 'Bom' Gillies, last survivor of the 28th (Māori) Battalion.

Born in Hastings, Hawke's Bay, New Zealand, on February 14, 1925, Gillies thrice tried to join the battalion, only succeeding by lying about his age. Serving in 'B' Company, he first fought near Italy's Sangro River. He was wounded at Orsogna and took part in the battle of Monte Cassino. Crossing the Rapido River in February 1944, he recalled: "Jerry had been there for months. There were mines exploding, flares going up, the river was wiped with machine gun fire. We were trying to get our tanks across. The engineers were building a Bailey bridge. We were pummelled."

Post-war, he worked as a telephone engineer and builder, marrying Rae Ratema in 1948. They had three sons, and he built the family home. In later life, Sir Gillies represented the Māori Battalion, including at the 2014, 2019 and 2024 Monte Cassino commemorations in Italy, and campaigned for veterans of the battalion to receive medals for which they were eligible.

Sir Robert Gillies, 28th Māori Battalion veteran NEW ZEALAND DEFENCE FORCE

Following a three-day cultural funeral rite known as tangi, Sir Gillies was buried alongside his wife in Rotorua. Among those present was NZ Labour MP Peeni Henare, who accompanied Bom when he was knighted. Henare, whose grandfather Sir James was the last commander of the Māori Battalion, said: "I'll never forget Bom's words: 'Peeni, I'm a nobody. We held people like your grandfather, Sir James Henare, Sir Charles Bennett on a pedestal and to be now considered a Sir... I'm still a nobody."

Gillies was knighted in Queen Elizabeth II's 2022 New Year Honours in New Zealand list. He previously refused the title, but eventually accepted it, stating: "There are many soldiers who did more and who have never been recognised. I accept on behalf of all the boys, all my mates who served." Labour MP and former Crown Minister Willie Jackson flew to see Gillies – then 96 and having just completed repairs to his roof – to convince him to accept the honour. Writing in the *NZ Daily Herald*, he remembered: "This incredibly humble man told me that I was wasting my time and he would not be taking a knighthood. He was 'just a private' and embarrassed that his name could sit alongside names such as Sir James Henare, Moana Ngarimu VC and Pita Awatere: 'It would be embarrassing, son, don't do this to me."

Jackson informed him that "all Māori are proud of your achievements", acknowledging the unit's experiences had not received the attention they deserved. He said: "We don't care that you were not an officer. All we know is that you are the last man standing and it would be a privilege to honour you and, through you, those men in the Māori Battalion will also be honoured and remembered."

In October 2024, the unit was recognised by the addition of battle honours on the new colours of the 2nd/1st Royal New Zealand Infantry Regiment, which received the flags from Governor-General Dame Cindy Kiro. Bom was unable to attend, but his grandson, Te Whanoa Gillies, said: "It's a huge recognition for them, very proud to be here to represent him. I know the family back home will be watching." Major General Rose King visited Sir Gillies days before he died and said that she was pleased the NZ Defence Force was able to fulfil one of his last wishes.

Sir Robert Gillies died on November 7, 2024, aged 99. The national flag was flown at half-mast from government and public buildings in honour of the reluctant hero.

Flying the flag

The Royal Navy's new flagship has called into Liverpool, her affiliated city, for the first time in four years. HMS *Prince of Wales* – shown in front of the iconic Liver building – recently received the freedom of the city and berthed on the Mersey in the Liverpool Cruise Terminal, when she was opened to the public for a week. The 65,000-tonne aircraft carrier became fleet flagship on December 2, taking over from her sister, HMS *Queen Elizabeth*. The ships will rotate the role as they move between stand-by for short notice deployments/priority taskings and routine maintenance/training. Soon, *Prince of Wales* will take the UK Carrier Strike Group 2025 task force east of the Suez Canal.

LPHOT STUART DICKSON/MOD

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THE FALL OF SINGAPORE

This extensive tour to the three countries of Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand examines the personal, national and imperial agony and humiliation that resulted from the Japanese lightening conquest. Starting from Kuala Lumpur we examine the limited resistance offered by British Imperial Forces as they withdrew southwards to Singapore and explore the not so impossible Malay Jungle terrain that failed to impede an invading army. Crossing the Johore Straits we spend five-nights in Singapore during which we: scrutinise the initial defence plan and its failure; inspect the colossal coastal batteries; stand on the Japanese landing beaches; walk the battlefields on the edge of the city itself; visit the British Command Centre, see the sites of Percival's (and the eventual Japanese) surrender, contemplate the POW camp experience; reveal the Japanese massacre sites; and wander through colonial Singapore.

2nd - 14th March 2025 With Dr Robert Lyman

The Korean War

Whilst the focus of our tour is clearly on the Korean War, our journey takes us through some tranquil idyllic landscapes: pine-clad hills and emerald-green rice-paddies.

16-27 April '25 with Lieutenant-General Jonathon Riley

Operation Husky

The island of Sicily is rich in military history. From classical Greek and Roman sites, to the Napoleonic war and, of course, the Second World War.

1st - 7th April 2025 With Colonel David Barron

The Spanish Civil War

Starting in Madrid this tour explores the main battles that took place on the city's periphery, in particular the exploits of the British and American volunteers, as the Republicans held on to the capital city throughout the war.

3rd - 10th April 2025 With Colonel Ray Wilkinson

Dictator: Mussolini & Italian Fascism

This tour tells the complete story of Benito Mussolini and Italian Fascism from its violent beginnings to its ignominious end. This tour explores and explains both Mussolini the man and the dark creed he created.

10th - 17th April 2025 With Professor John Foot

The French Revolution

This wonderful Revolutionary tour of Paris and Versailles is mostly enjoyed on foot and by metro. And whilst many of the locations will be familiar to you, many of the events and stories associated with them may not be.

11th - 14th April 2025 With Professor Dave Andress

The Gallipoli Campaign

During this wonderful tour to Turkey we will visit and examine the main aspects of the Gallipoli campaign: the naval assault, the problems of landing against defended beaches at Cape Helles, the command, control and communication issues, and the miracle that was ANZAC.

30th April - 8th May 2025 With Colonel Bob Kershaw

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A glimpse into the past

On the eve of her 40th birthday, sailors of the Royal Navy minehunter HMS *Chiddingfold* discovered a fascinating trove of mementoes, relating to life and service aboard the ship's World War Two destroyer namesake

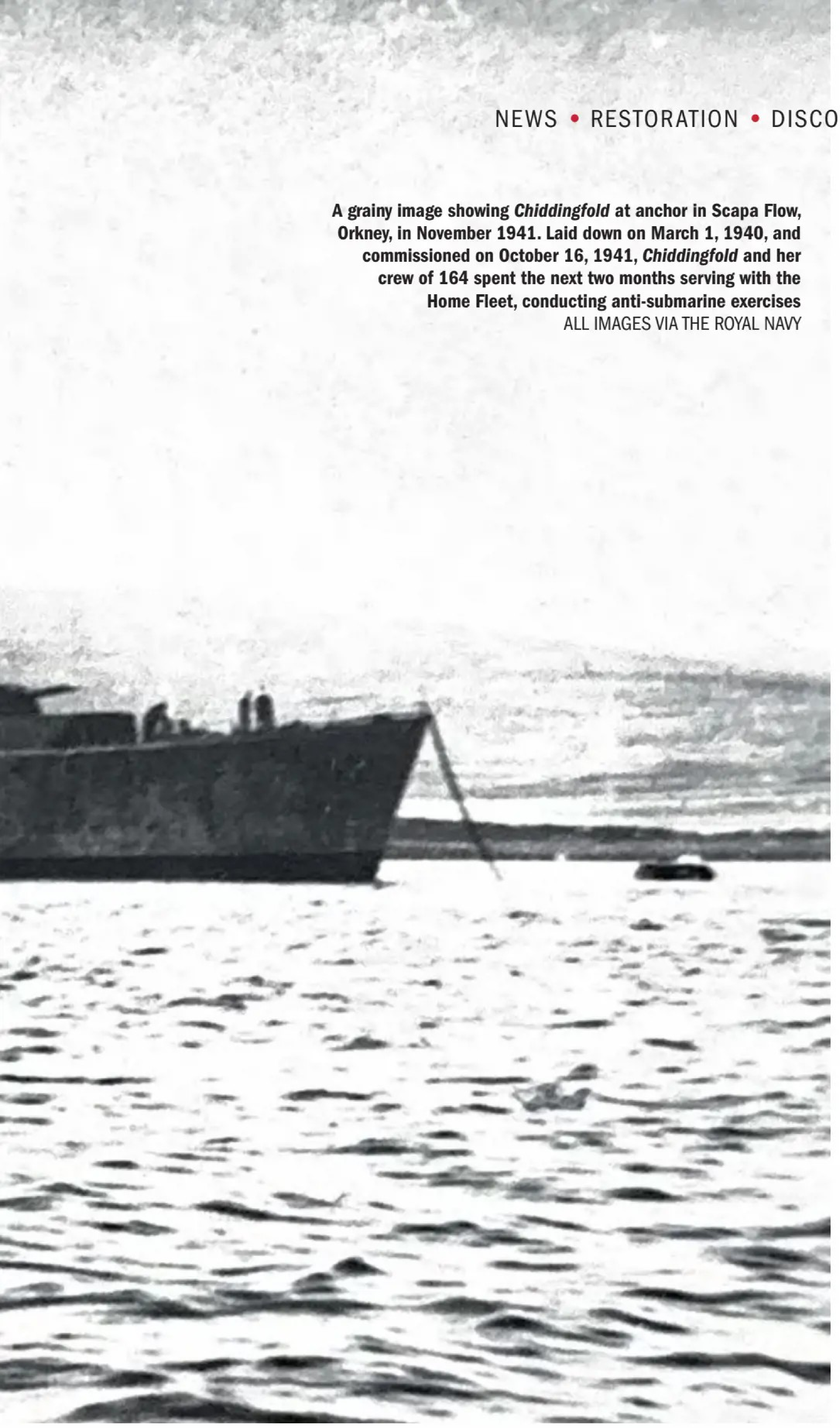
WORDS: TOM BAKER

The discovery of a time capsule aboard the Royal Navy minehunter HMS *Chiddingfold* has provided an invaluable glimpse into life on a British warship in the 1940s and 1950s.

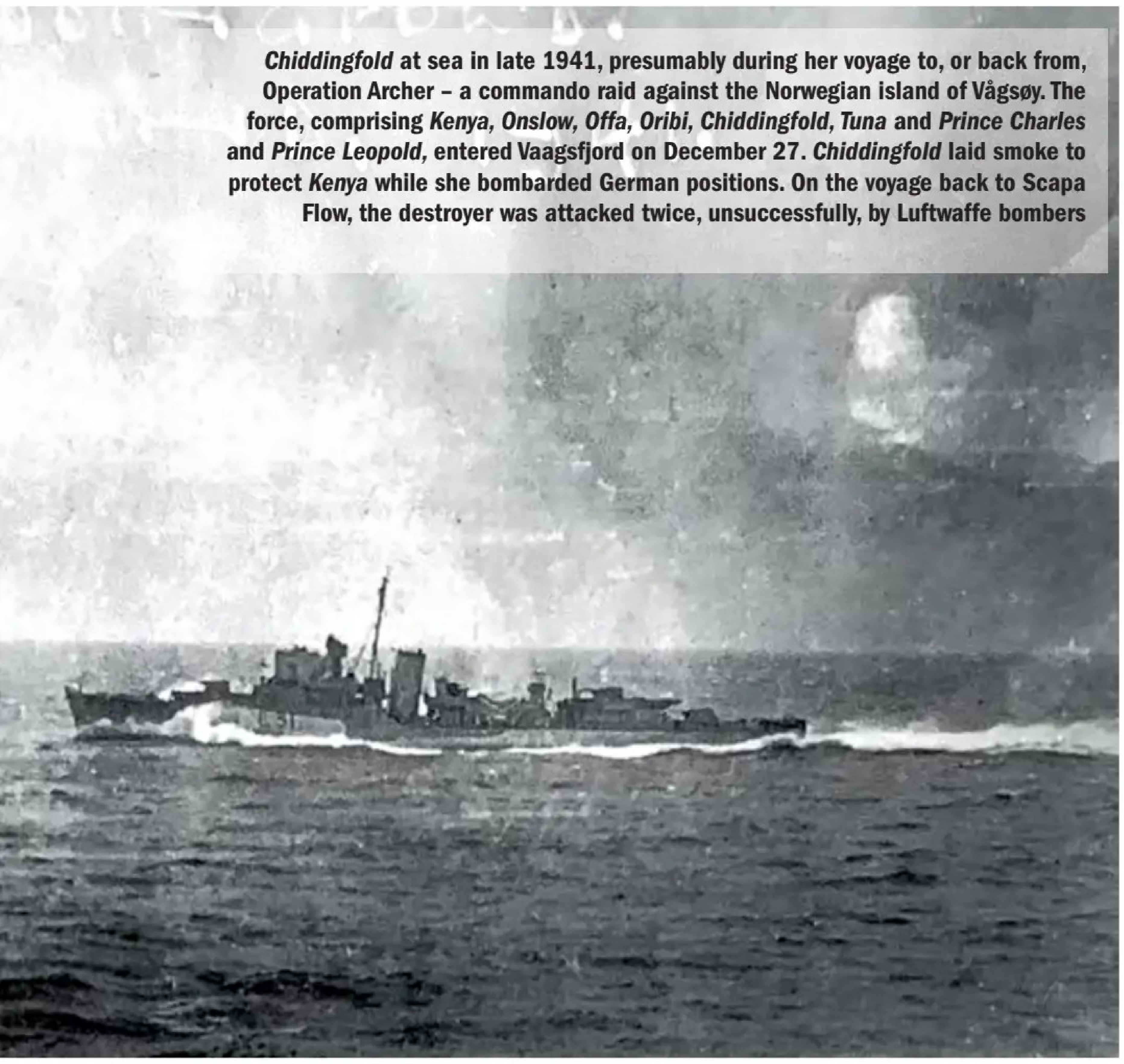
The comprehensive scrapbook, containing many wartime mementoes, belonged to a sailor serving aboard the ship's World War Two namesake, one of 17 Type II Hunt-Class Destroyers The wartime HMS *Chiddingfold* (L31) and her sisters were commissioned to fulfil the navy's pressing need for a vessel capable of carrying out convoy escort duties.

Unlike many other wartime destroyers, *Chiddingfold* was described as "living a charmed life" during the conflict and it is believed that she was only slightly damaged and there were few crew casualties, despite participation in some of the Royal Navy's most dangerous missions. Alongside assisting with a commando raid against the Norwegian island of Vågsøy in 1941, the vessel also helped to destroy enemy shipping off Tromsø in early 1942, was involved in the Battle of the Barents Sea and participated in 15 escort missions between 1941 and 1945.

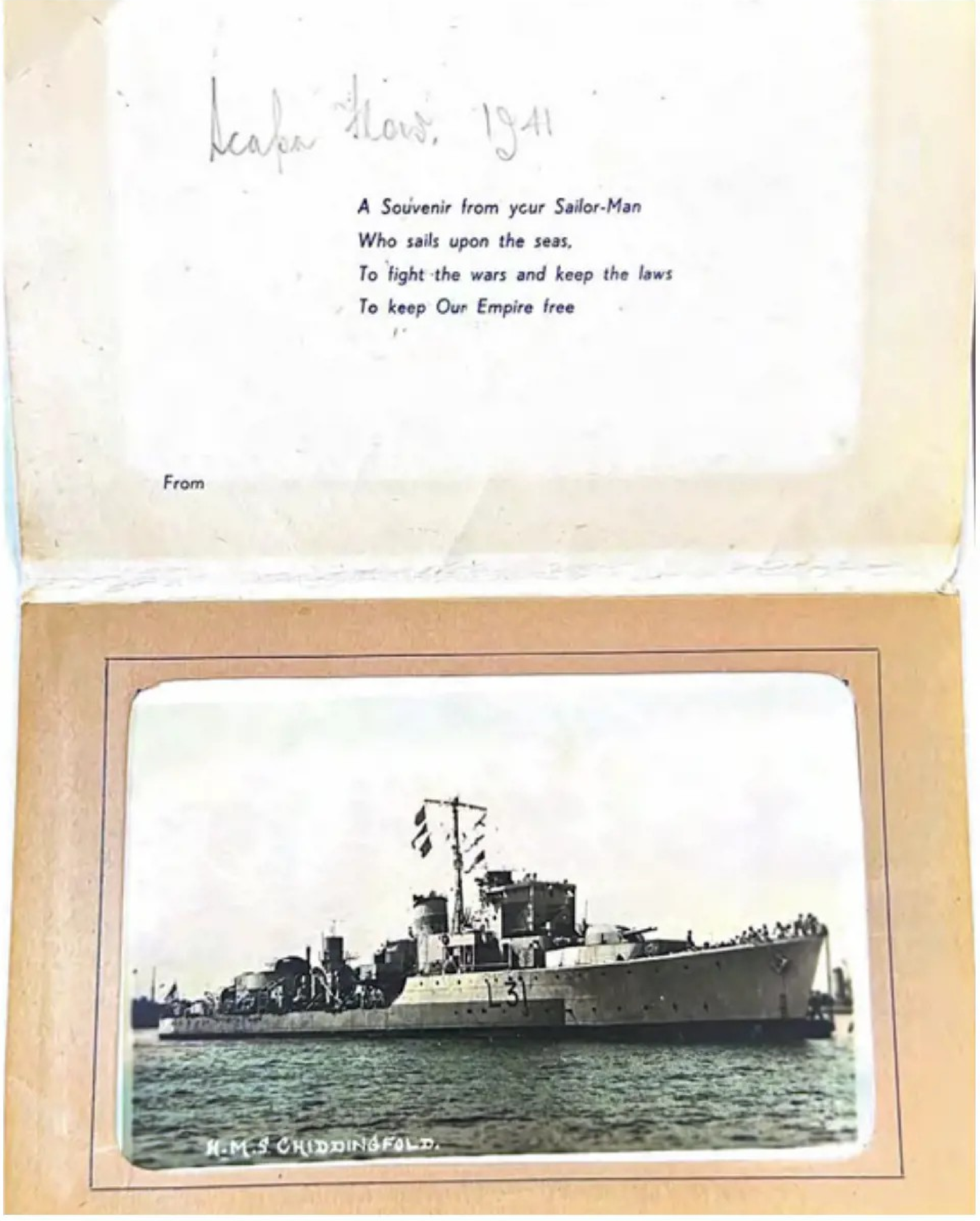
The unknown sailor kept a detailed account of the ship's wartime activities in a scrapbook, which was expanded with newspaper



A grainy image showing *Chiddingfold* at anchor in Scapa Flow, Orkney, in November 1941. Laid down on March 1, 1940, and commissioned on October 16, 1941, *Chiddingfold* and her crew of 164 spent the next two months serving with the Home Fleet, conducting anti-submarine exercises
ALL IMAGES VIA THE ROYAL NAVY



***Chiddingfold* at sea in late 1941, presumably during her voyage to, or back from, Operation Archer – a commando raid against the Norwegian island of Vågsøy. The force, comprising *Kenya, Onslow, Offa, Oribi, Chiddingfold, Tuna* and *Prince Charles* and *Prince Leopold,* entered Vaagsfjord on December 27. *Chiddingfold* laid smoke to protect *Kenya* while she bombarded German positions. On the voyage back to Scapa Flow, the destroyer was attacked twice, unsuccessfully, by Luftwaffe bombers**



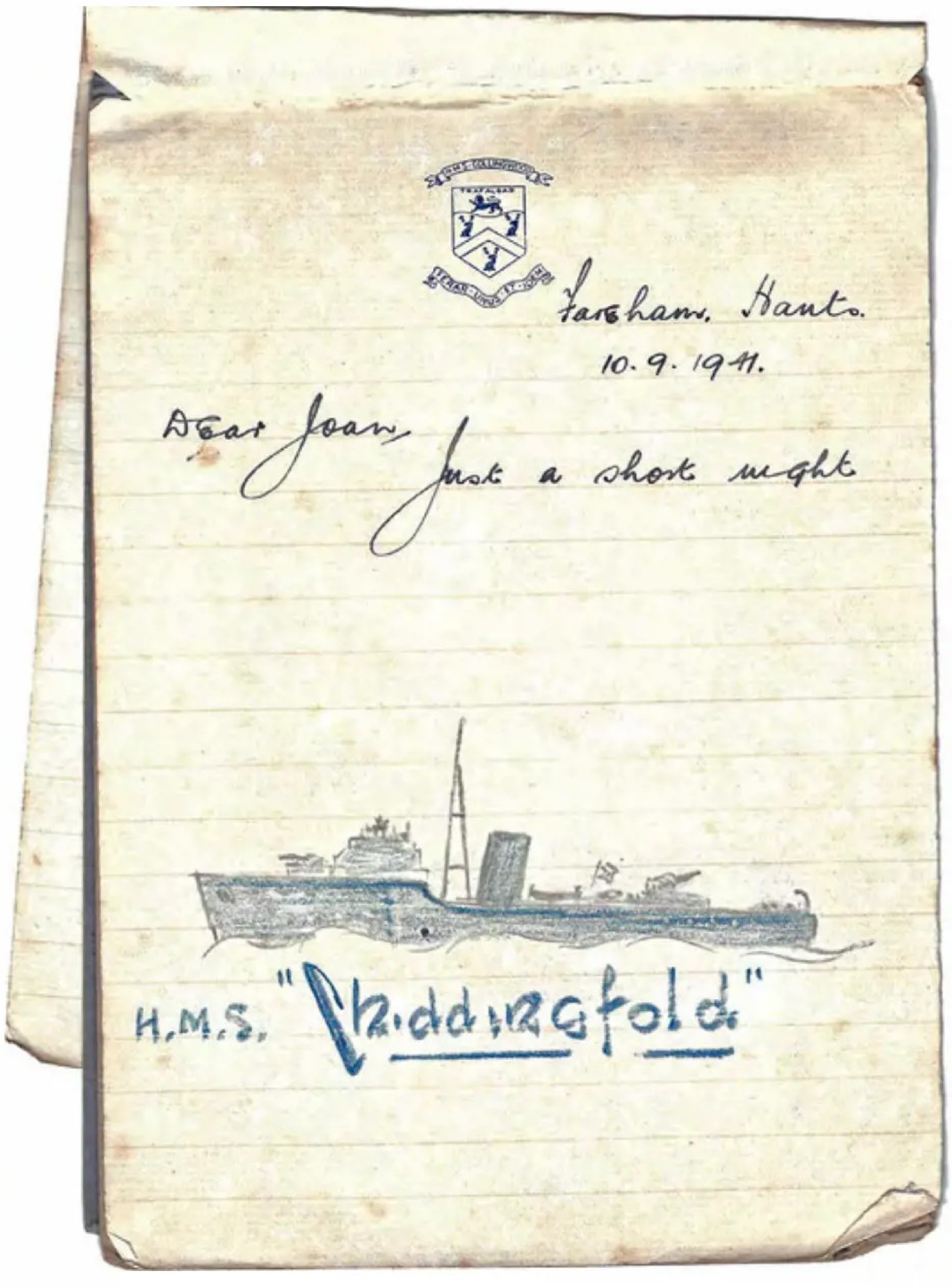
Scapa Flow, 1941

A Souvenir from your Sailor-Man
Who sails upon the seas,
To fight the wars and keep the laws
To keep Our Empire free

From

H.M.S CHIDDINGFOLD.

A wartime postcard belonging to a sailor from *Chiddingfold*, dated to 1941, from Scapa Flow, depicting *Chiddingfold* with an accompanying poem reading: "A souvenir from your sailor-man, who sails upon the seas, to fight the wars and keep the laws, to keep our Empire free"

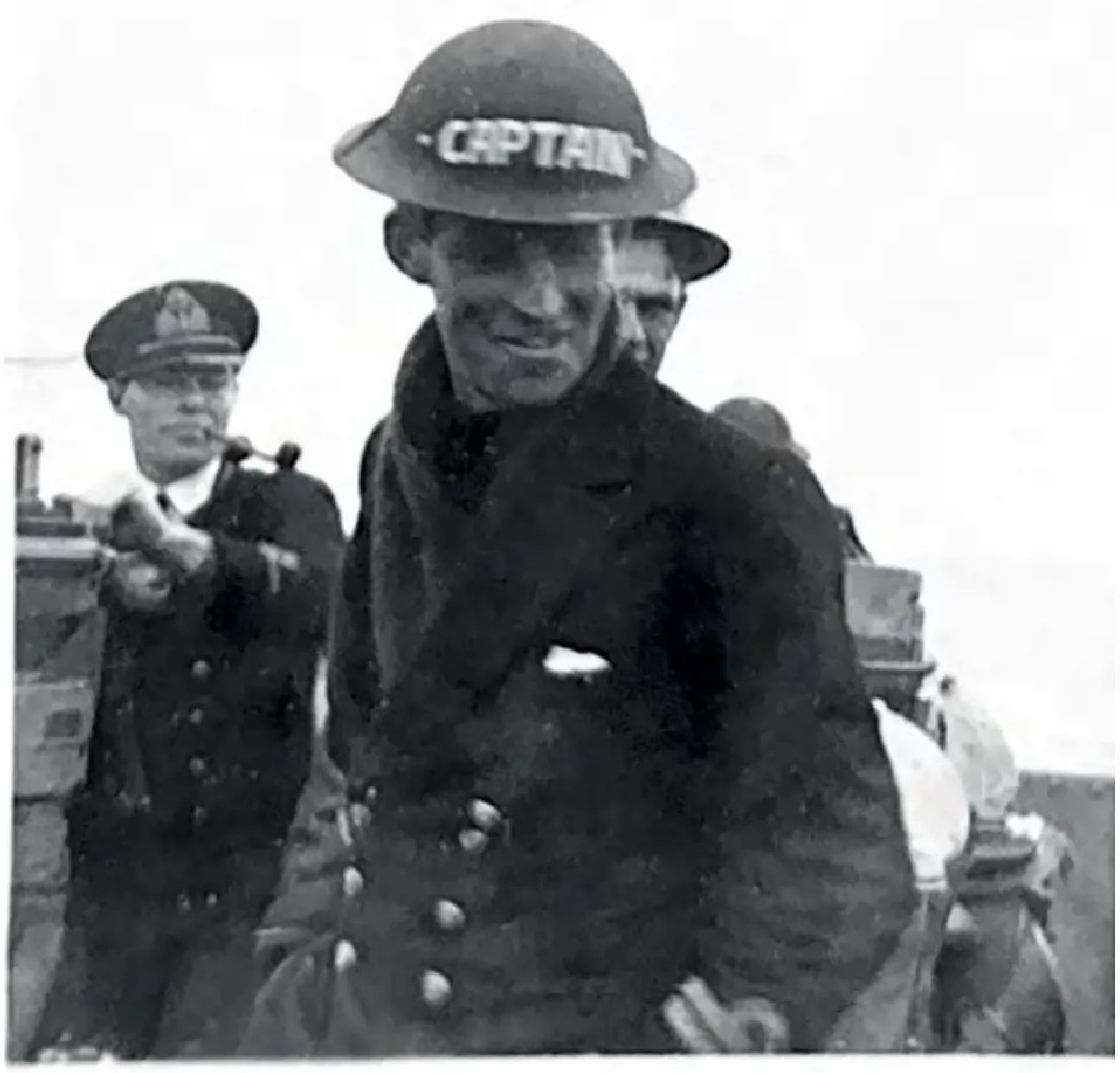


Fareham, Hants.
10. 9. 1941.

Dear Joan,
Just a short night

H.M.S. "Chiddingfold"

An unfinished letter from a *Chiddingfold* sailor to a family member or loved one named Joan, written from HMS *Collingwood*, a Royal Navy shore establishment for training naval ratings



HMS *Chiddingfold's* second commanding officer, Lieutenant Thomas Dorrien-Smith, son of Lord Proprietor of the Isles of Scilly Arthur Dorrien-Smith DSO, and great-nephew of General Sir Horace Lockwood Smith-Dorrien GCB, GCMG, DSO, ADC – GOC, II Corps, at the Battle of Mons and one of the few survivors of the Battle of Isandlwana. Thomas commanded *Chiddingfold* from April 1943 until August 1944, during which time he received the news that all three of his brothers had been killed in action. Immediately after the war, Thomas married Princess Tamara Imeretinsky of Georgia and became alderman of Tresco

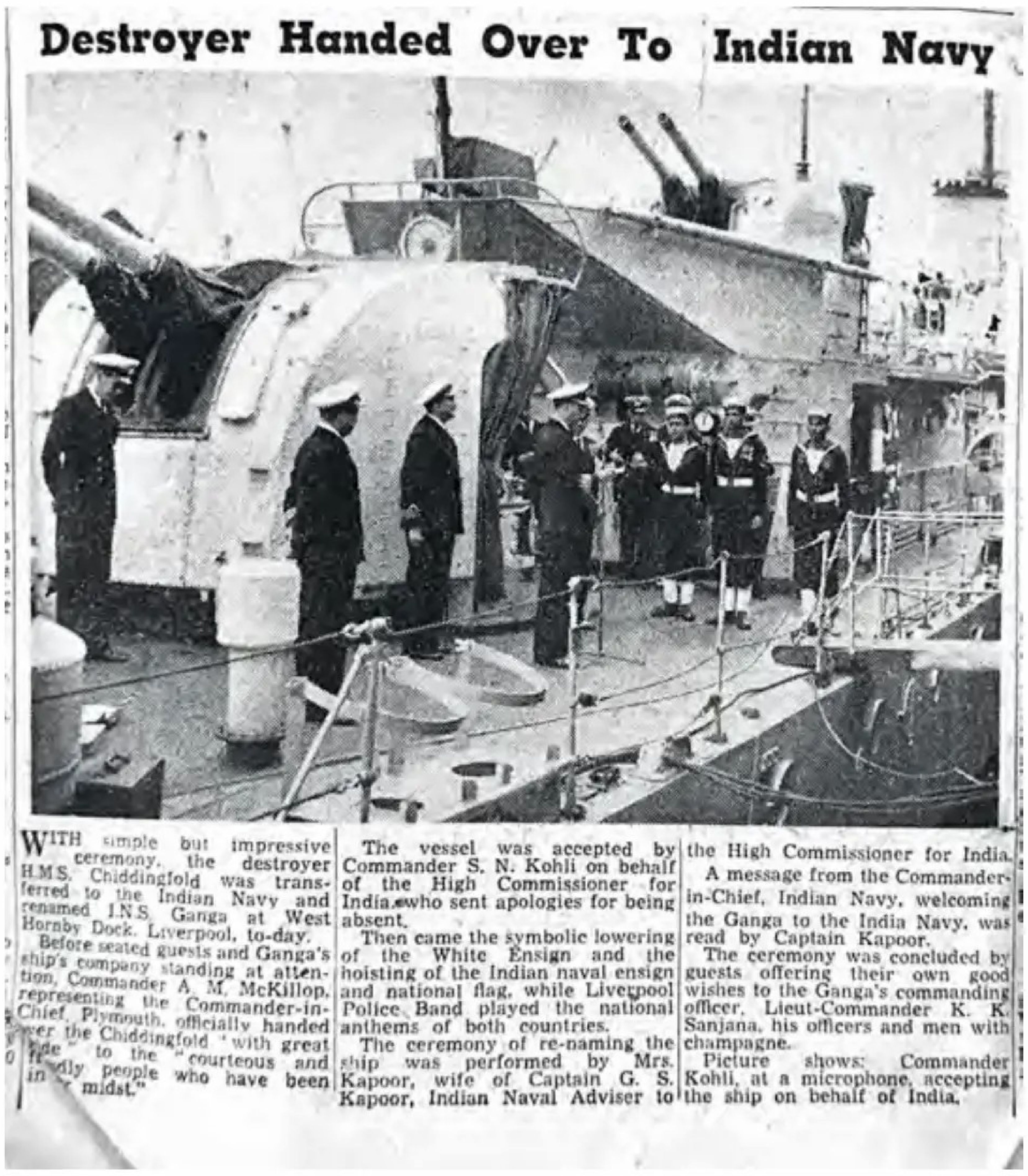
Many of the photographs are glimpses of daily life aboard *Chiddingfold*, such as this image depicting the crew hosting a selection of visitors in the Mediterranean. Such images exemplify "the stories shared, the sights witnessed and the memories shaped by this incredible ship", as Lieutenant Commander Craig Clark stated during *Chiddingfold's* 40th birthday celebrations

clippings and memorabilia tracing her post-war journey until her eventual transfer to the Indian Navy in 1952.

In October 1983, the Royal Navy launched a new mine countermeasures vessel reviving the *Chiddingfold* name, and the contents of the scrapbook were donated to the crew of the new minehunter. However, at some point over the next four decades of service, it became forgotten.

However, on the eve of her 40th birthday in 2024, the album resurfaced as the minehunter was undergoing a refit in Bahrain. Containing such items as an unfinished letter to a loved one, a sentimental postcard and an eclectic mix of photographs, the scrapbook offers an intriguing snapshot of the original *Chiddingfold's* wartime service, and what life aboard was like for her crew. BW

This photograph, taken from the deck of *Chiddingfold*, shows the destroyer passing a surfaced submarine somewhere in the Mediterranean after her posting to the 59th Destroyer Squadron in late 1943. One of *Chiddingfold's* primary roles was to conduct anti-submarine sweeps



Destroyer Handed Over To Indian Navy

WITH simple but impressive ceremony, the destroyer H.M.S. Chiddingfold was transferred to the Indian Navy and renamed I.N.S. Ganga at West Hornby Dock, Liverpool, to-day.

Before seated guests and Ganga's ship's company standing at attention, Commander A. M. McKillop, representing the Commander-in-Chief, Plymouth, officially handed over the Chiddingfold "with great pride" to the "courteous and friendly people who have been in [illegible] midst."

The vessel was accepted by Commander S. N. Kohli on behalf of the High Commissioner for India, who sent apologies for being absent.

Then came the symbolic lowering of the White Ensign and the hoisting of the Indian naval ensign and national flag, while Liverpool Police Band played the national anthems of both countries.

The ceremony of re-naming the ship was performed by Mrs. Kapoor, wife of Captain G. S. Kapoor, Indian Naval Adviser to the High Commissioner for India.

A message from the Commander-in-Chief, Indian Navy, welcoming the Ganga to the India Navy, was read by Captain Kapoor.

The ceremony was concluded by guests offering their own good wishes to the Ganga's commanding officer, Lieut-Commander K. K. Sanjana, his officers and men with champagne.

Picture shows: Commander Kohli, at a microphone, accepting the ship on behalf of India.

One of the last additions to the scrapbook was this newspaper clipping covering the leasing of *Chiddingfold* to the newly independent Indian Navy in the 1950s. Following the announcement of the transfer on June 17, 1952, the destroyer underwent a full refit and, after its completion in June 1953, was commissioned as INS *Ganga*. Subsequently sold to India in April 1958, INS *Ganga* served alongside two other Hunt-class destroyers and remained in service until 1975, before being decommissioned and sold for scrap

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Despatches

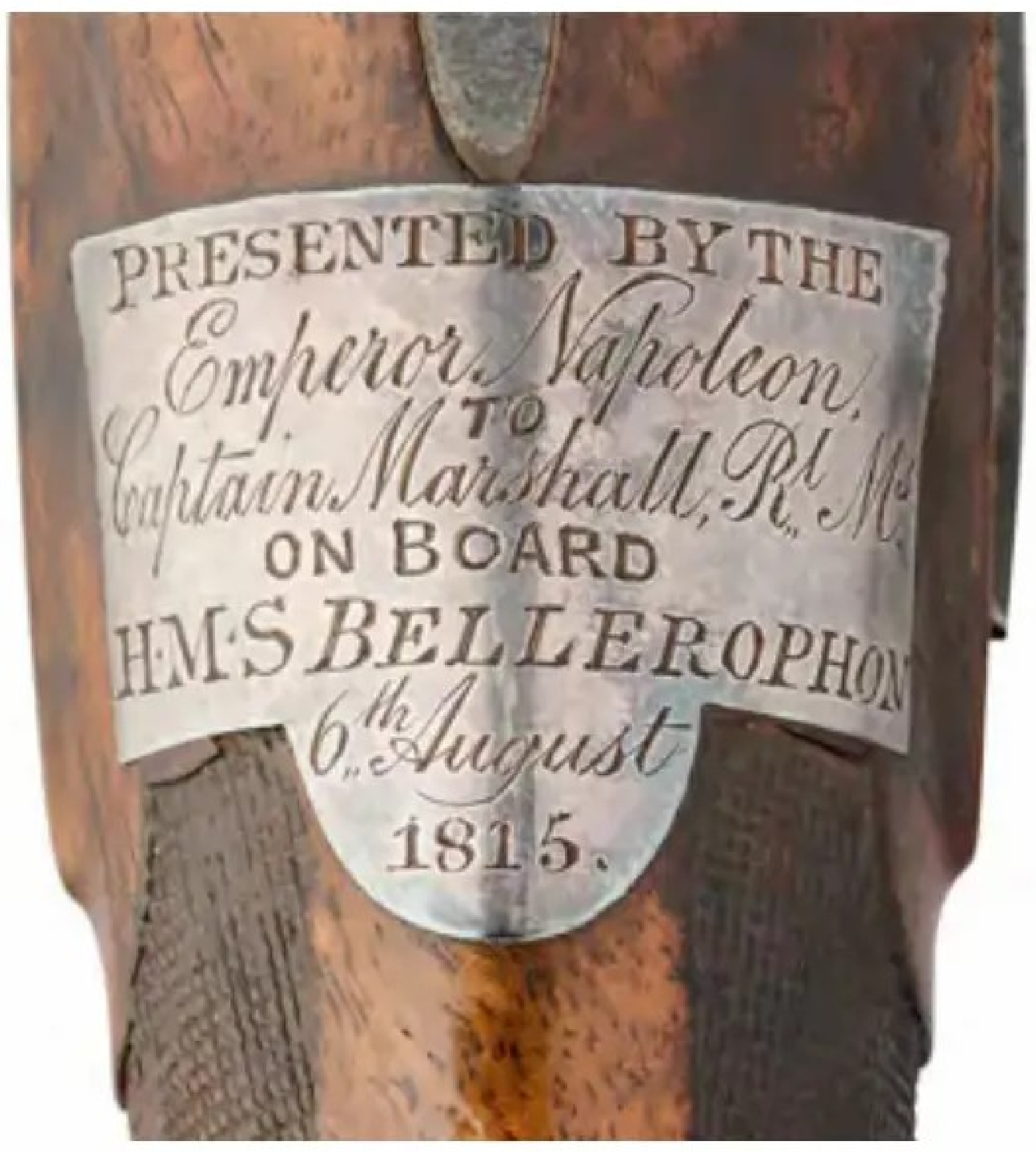
With lots relating to Winston Churchill and Napoleon fetching extraordinary sums, historical figures clearly continue to generate huge interest

BRACE OF NAPOLEON'S PISTOLS DOUBLE GUIDE

The sidearms presented by the French emperor to a Royal Marine have gone under the hammer in London

Having been defeated at Waterloo on June 18, 1815, the ousted Napoleon Bonaparte arrived in Rochefort in early July, where a French flotilla was waiting to escort him into exile in the United States and avoid capture by the restored Bourbon monarchy, Prussians or Austrians. However, the British sought to stop him, with HMS *Bellerophon*, under the command of Captain Frederick Maitland, forming part of a blockading force. Realising there was little alternative but to surrender to the British, Napoleon sent emissaries to negotiate his onward travel to the Americas. However, Maitland was ordered to bring Napoleon and his retinue to Britain. The emperor sailed on the brig *Épervier* to meet *Bellerophon* on July 15 and was taken aboard, ending the Napoleonic Wars.

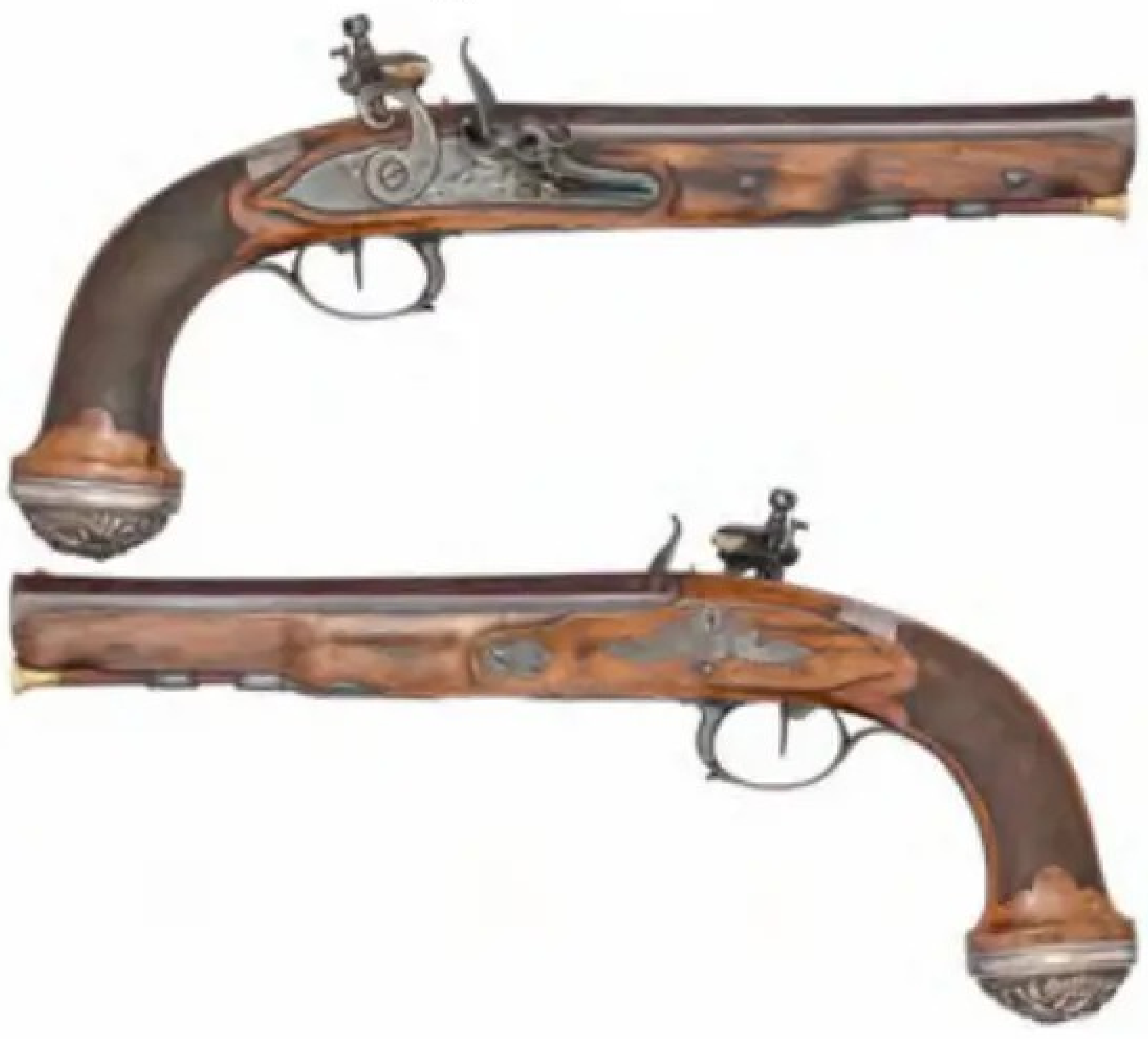
After being shown round the ship and taken to its grand cabin, he was transported to Britain. *Bellerophon* anchored off Plymouth for a fortnight while Napoleon's fate was decided. On July 31, he was informed of his exile to Saint Helena as a prisoner of war and that he was to be transferred to HMS *Northumberland* for the journey. *Bellerophon* sailed to meet her and, on August 6, Napoleon presented two of his flintlocks to Captain George Marshall, captain of Marines, whose men would have guarded him while he was aboard the vessel.



While annoyed that he could never set foot in Britain, let alone remain there in political asylum – nor meet the Prince Regent (reputedly, at least in part, to recommend that Captain Maitland, a future rear-admiral, be promoted), the former emperor appreciated the hospitality shown to him when aboard *Bellerophon*. In 1826, Maitland's detailed account of Napoleon's dramatic capture was published.

The pistols were made by Versailles gunmaker and bladesmith Nicolas-Noël Boutet, the director of the state arms manufactory in Paris, who also made one of Napoleon's sabres. The gun's escutcheons bear the inscription "Presented by the Emperor Napoleon to Captain Marshall RL MS, on board HMS *Bellerophon*, 6th August 1815". The guns feature browned octagonal barrels with rifling, inscribed "Manufre. Impele a Versailles" and numbered '189'. They are also struck with gold-lined barrelsmith's marks ("Jean Nicolas Leclerc"), further gold-lined marks ("Neue Støckel 95, 97, 3741" and "Boutet"), and a band of gold foliage at the breech. The locks – of a flat, bevelled design – are signed "Boutet a Versailles" and fitted with semi-rainproof pans. The grips and furniture are walnut, featuring chequering, light damage and signs of repairs. Much of the metalwork, including the side-plates, ramrod pipes and trigger guards are blued steel, while the pommels are cast silver and struck with Paris silver marks.

Given a guide of £14,000, the pistols were part of Thomas Del Mar's sale of Fine Antique Arms, Armour & Militaria at Olympia Auctions in December. However, the lot more than double this estimate, fetching £30,000



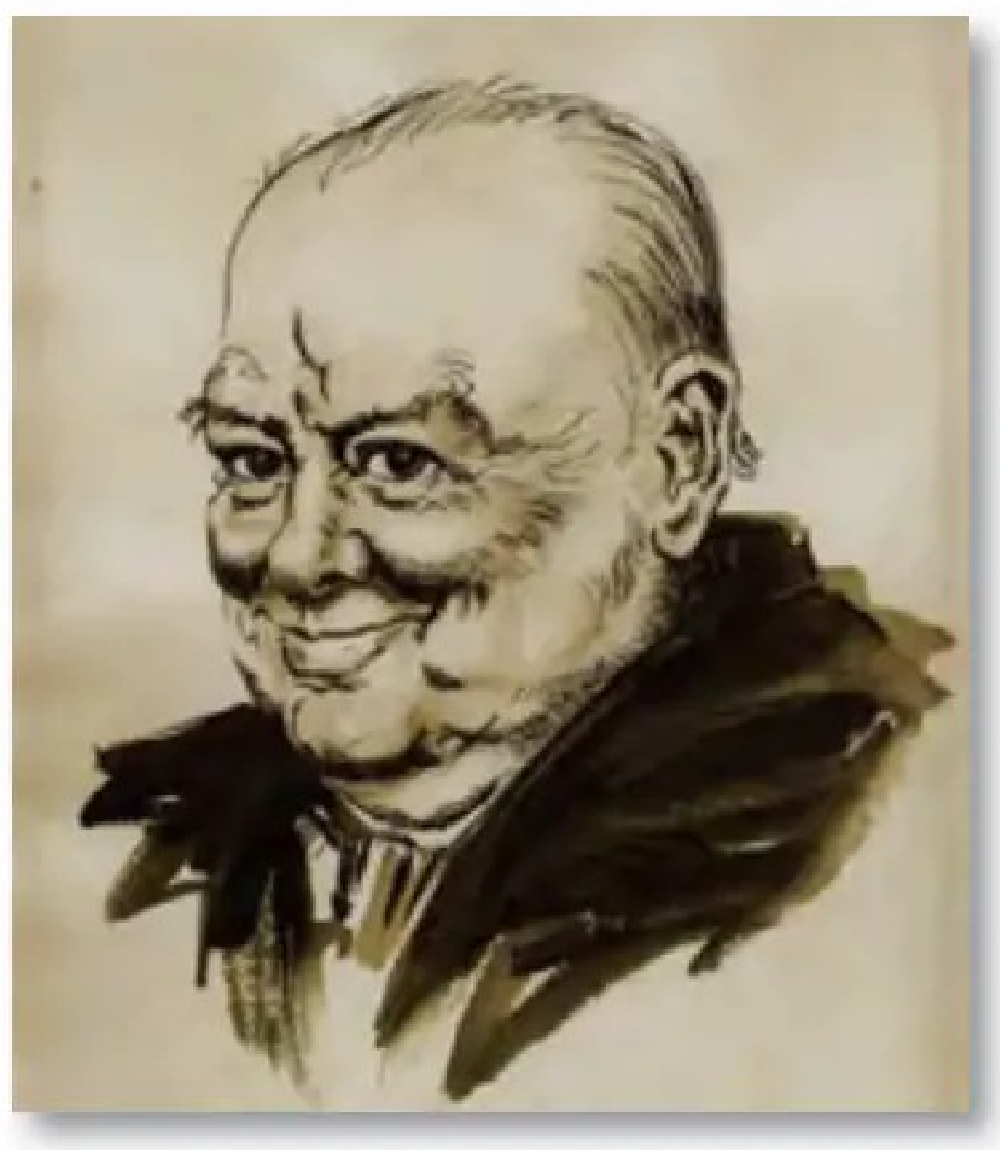
IMAGES: OLYMPIA AUCTIONS

SIGNED CHURCHILL CARICATURE SOARS

The "most important Winston Churchill portrait in existence", has fetched a huge sum at auction

Acclaimed artist Paul Trevillion was just 20 when, in 1954, he heard of Winston Churchill's infamous displeasure about a portrait commissioned for the retired prime minister's 80th birthday.

Created by Graham Sutherland, Churchill disliked it so that he had it thrown it on a bonfire, later telling his private secretary that he "looked like a down-and-out-drunk who had been picked out of the gutter in the Strand". Paul, who is now 90, said: "Churchill's birthday was ruined by the Sutherland portrait, so I decided to do my own for his next birthday. My drawing was based on images I'd seen of Churchill when I was a child in the Blitz. He was always smiling and those images of him helped me cope with the nightly raids."



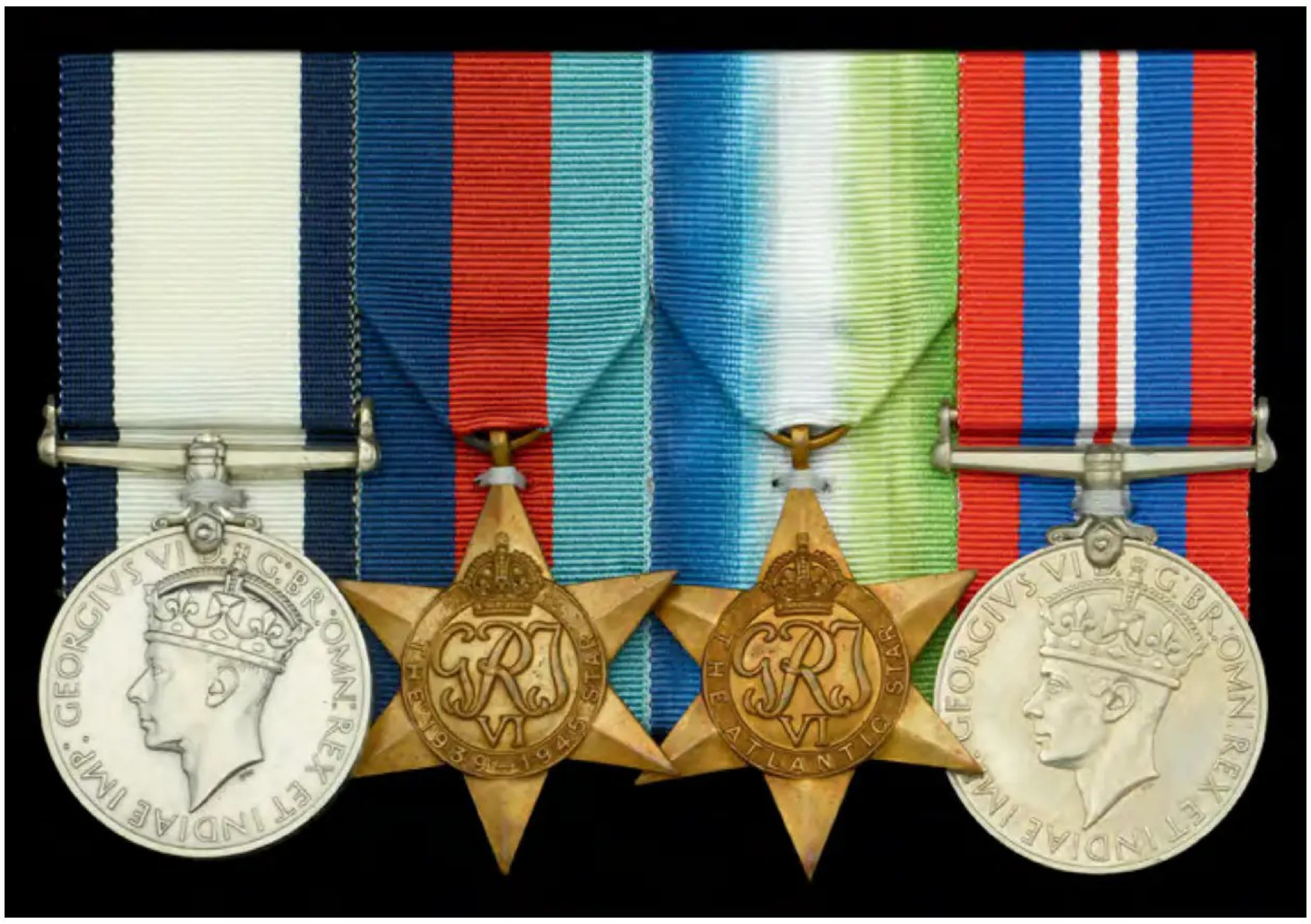
Paul managed to get his upbeat creation delivered to Churchill. A week later, the artist received a call from him, and he stated: "Winston here. I will be at the Bernard Sunley Buildings, Berkeley Square, on Wednesday at 10:30am. Oblige." At the meeting, Churchill personally signed Paul's portrait, telling the young artist: "There have been a lot of portraits painted of me, but this one I really like. It's the only one I've ever signed." Trevillion's unique pen-and-ink portrait went under the hammer at Hanson's Auctioneers in London Piccadilly's RAF Club in November. After a bidding war, the final hammer price was £72,000, with part of the proceeds donated to charity, including the Peace Field Projects and the Churchill Foundation. Auctioneer Charles Hanson said post-sale: "It was a remarkable result. The atmosphere was electric. We had bids and interest from far and wide. The winning bidders are great collectors of iconic art. They were thrilled.

"We're also delighted for Paul, an exceptional artist. Items connected to Churchill will continue to be highly collected and this picture is particularly important. Paul captured the spirit and character of his hero and warmed Churchill's heart."

IMAGE: HANSONS

TIRPITZ RAID CGM FETCHES £50,000

A CGM awarded to a sailor who volunteered for a "special and hazardous" mission to attack an infamous German battleship has been sold by Noonans



Engine Room Artificer Edmund Goddard volunteered for the Royal Navy in 1941. Yet, no deck awaited him, but instead fire-watching duties atop the roof of the barracks in Portsmouth. However, in May 1942, the Admiralty called for volunteers for "special and hazardous service" and Goddard signed up.

He was posted to the X-Craft unit, tasked with the destruction of the battleships *Tirpitz* and *Scharnhorst* and the heavy cruiser *Lützow* at anchor in the Norwegian fjords. Some 50ft long, the 'midget submarines' were capable of infiltrating the fjords unseen, from where they could damage or destroy their targets by deploying large amatol charges. On September 10, 1944, the order was given to launch.

After being towed into the operational area, Goddard's craft, X6 – alongside X5 and X7 – began a 50-mile journey to the anchorage. X6, in which Goddard was helmsman, was to attack *Tirpitz* in the Kaafjord. However, X6's commander, Lieutenant Donald Cameron, noticed that the periscope was defective. Pressing on, X6 broke the surface just 80 yards from the battleship and was spotted, forcing the submarine to dive. She resurfaced beneath the port bow and manoeuvred abreast of 'Bruno' turret, after which Cameron released the amatol charges with a fuse set for one hour. Believing that they were unlikely to survive a return to open waters, the crew then decided to surrender.

Taken aboard Tirpitz, Goddard and his fellow submariners were moved below decks and interrogated, during which their charge went off. Meanwhile, X7 and X6 had successfully placed their charges on *Tirpitz*, although only two men survived. The explosions severely damaged *Tirpitz*, causing substantial flooding, spoiling three main engine rooms and putting one generator room out of action, along with her wireless telegraphy rooms and her rangefinders. Two main turrets, the anti-aircraft control station and port rudder were also damaged.

Although sent to Marlag Milag Nord POW Camp near Bremen, Goddard and X6's crew successfully escaped from a forced march in March 1945 and, after a week, were picked up by British troops. At an investiture on June 22, 1945, the two commanding officers of the raid – Lieutenants Cameron and Basil Place – were awarded the Victoria Cross. The other surviving officers received the DSO, while Goddard received the CGM. The medal group, comprising Goddard's CGM, 1939-45 Star, Atlantic Star and War Medal 1939-45, reached its upper estimate, fetching £50,000 – almost £1 for every tonne of the battleship's displacement at full-load – at the Noonans auction. Also included were various photographs of Goddard, including one with him stood before an X-Craft.

Another interesting lot sold at Noonans was that of a rare Korean War Commando (Amphibious Raiding Force) MM and group, one of just nine MMs awarded to the Royal Marines during the conflict and the only one awarded for combat in the Battle of Chosin Reservoir on December 7, 1950. Awarded to Marine Arthur Harper of 41 Independent Commando, Royal Marines, attached 1st US Marine Division, the group sold for £28,000, beating its £20,000 guide.

IMAGES: NOONANS

FORTHCOMING SALES

- **Noonans** January 15 & February 12, 2025
- **Richard Winterton Auctioneers** January 29 & February 26, 2025
- **Lockdales Auctioneers & Valuer** February 4-5, 2025
- **Wilson55** February 5, 2025
- **McTear's** February 12, 2025
- **Toovey's** February 5, 2025 (two sales)
- **1818 Auctioneers** February 13-March 2, 2025 (timed auction)
- **Warwick & Warwick** February 19. 2025
- **Adam Partridge Auctioneers & Valuers** March 4, 2025
- **Tennants Auctioneers** March 19, 2025

NOTE: Listings include medals, militaria, arms and armour, war art and other historical-themed sales. Dates and catalogues are subject to change.

Debrief

We used Google Trends to find six common questions on the **Jameson Raid of 1896**... now an expert gives informed answers

THIS MONTH'S HISTORIAN: **GERRY VAN TONDER**

Who was Jameson?

Born in Edinburgh in February 1853, Leander Starr Jameson enrolled at the University College London in 1870, from where he graduated in surgery, anatomy and medicine. In 1878, he emigrated to South Africa and established a practice in the diamond town of Kimberley. There, he met Cecil John Rhodes, quickly falling under the diamond magnate's vision of everything from the Cape to Cairo belonging to the British Crown.

In the 1880s, on behalf of Rhodes, Jameson visited King Lobengula Khumalo, ruler of the Northern Ndebele (Matabele) people in Matabeleland, north of the Limpopo River where, as physician to the ailing monarch, he established a position of trust. Jameson exploited this position to help persuade Lobengula to grant Rhodes' British South Africa Company (BSACo) exclusive mining rights in Mashonaland (to the east of Matabeleland) in return for 1,000 Martini-Henry rifles and 100,000 rounds.

In 1890, Jameson accompanied a column of white settlers, escorted by 500 mounted company police, into the territory. In 1893, as the BSACo's administrator in Mashonaland, Jameson invaded Matabeleland with a punitive force to overthrow Lobengula and claim Matabeleland. With 672 mounted white troops and several hundred Mashona warriors, and bringing with them five Maxim guns, a Nordenfelt, a Gardner gun, two seven-pounders and a one-pounder Hotchkiss, Jameson's expedition was a success, sending Lobengula fleeing into obscurity.

Why did Jameson invade the sovereign Boer Transvaal Republic?

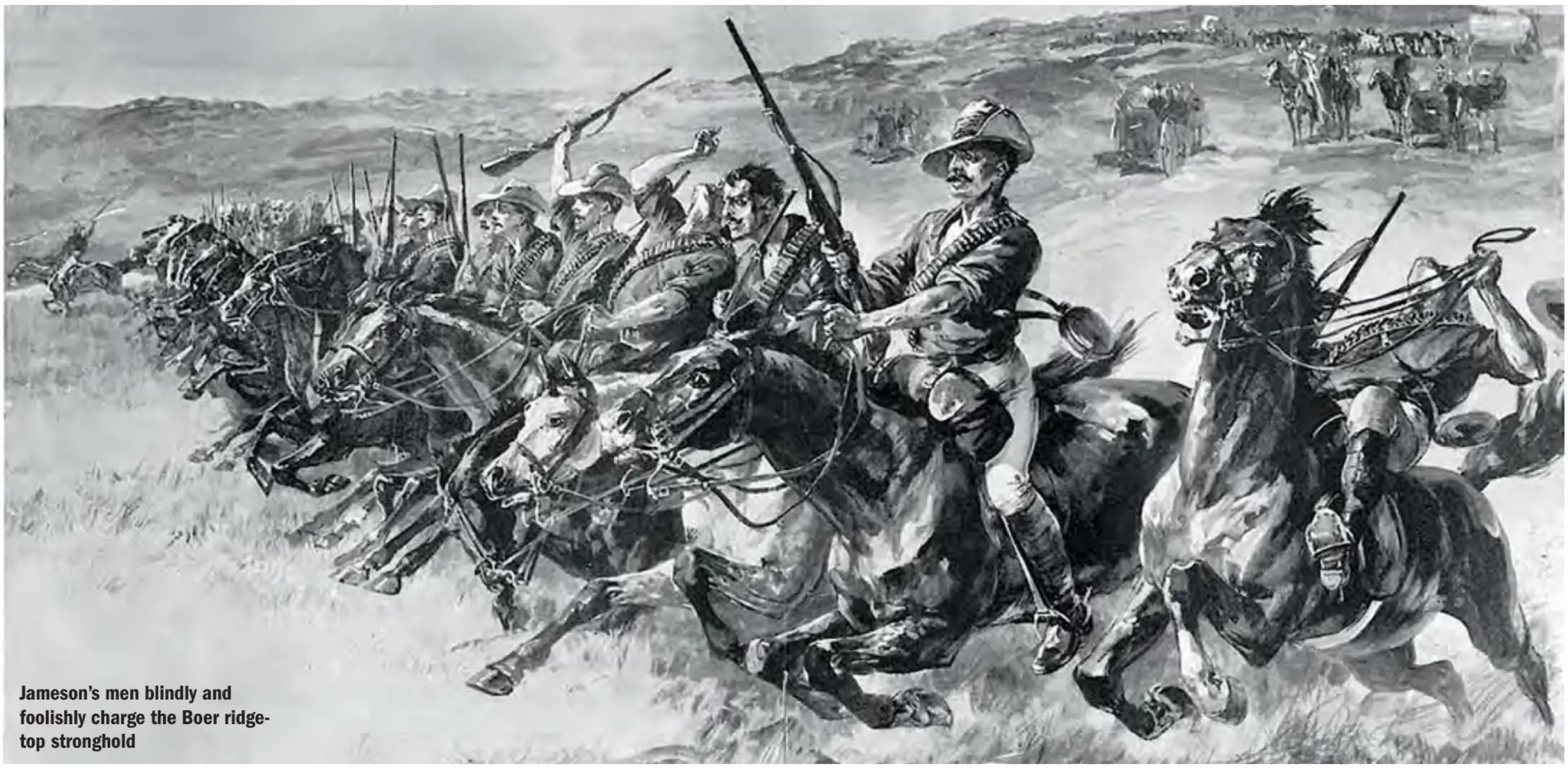
The reasons for the 1896 raid are complex and divisive. From Johannesburg-based Britons, Jameson heard of the Rand gold-mining economy being massively overtaxed by President Paul Kruger's Transvaal Republic. Ten years earlier, the Witwatersrand Gold Rush had attracted thousands of settlers to the area. Speaking of 15,000 Transvaal Boers controlling the lives of 50,000 disenfranchised Englishmen and Cape Colonists – uitlanders (outlanders/foreigners) – Jameson, as with Lobengula, regarded Kruger as an encumbrance in the quest for an 'all-red' continent.

Raid leader Leander Starr Jameson pictured in 1900 IMAGES COURTESY OF GERRY VAN TONDER

While there was talk of revolutionary change among the wealthy British mine owners on the Rand, the platform to implement this, the Reform Committee, comprised less than half of those 'unhappy' with the status quo. The committee had access to only 1,000 rifles and 10,000 rounds; in the opinion of High Commissioner Sir Henry Loch, this was insufficient to launch a coup. The biggest flaw in Jameson's plan was his total reliance on the Reform Committee to provide vital military support from Johannesburg.

What was the make-up of the raiding force?

Thanks to information supplied in 1896 by British High Commissioner Sir Hercules Robinson, to Secretary of State for the Colonies Joseph Chamberlain, we know the breakdown of the 511-strong force.



Jameson's men blindly and foolishly charge the Boer ridge-top stronghold

Jameson was in charge overall. Lieutenant-Colonel Sir John Bart, Royal Horse Guards, was the military commander. There were 17 staff officers and the fighting element comprised two mounted units: the Mashonaland Mounted Police (MMP) and the Bechuanaland Border Police (BBP). The MMP, led by Lieutenant-Colonel Henry White (Grenadier Guards), had a strength of 16 officers and 356 other ranks, while the BBP, under Lieutenant-Colonel Raleigh Grey (6th Dragoons), comprised nine officers and 113 other ranks. In addition, there were 150 tribesmen tasked with caring for the forces' equines: 640 horses and 158 mules. Support weapons included eight Maxims, and a 12½-pounder and two seven-pounders. More than 100 MMP troops were raw recruits brought up from the Cape Colony and who had never been to Rhodesia before.

What was Jameson's plan?

While 'planning', Jameson erroneously based the successful outcome of his raid on ostensible strengths to overcome any Boer opposition. He spoke of his own force comprising 1,500 troops and the Reform Committee having 5,000 rifles and one million rounds of ammunition smuggled into Johannesburg. Neither of these key elements materialised.

A lack of time and heavy rains also denied Jameson access to around 1,000 men of the Rhodesia Horse. In Johannesburg, there was no clear-cut programme to implement the disjointed, procrastinating Reform Committee's plan. Jameson's total lack of military experience and his cavalier self-confidence could only lead to disaster. Jameson blindly and dogmatically refused to heed instructions from BSACo, the High Commissioner and the Boers to abort his raid. He also badly underestimated Boer capabilities – Kruger knew exactly where Jameson would cross into the Transvaal late on December 29, 1895.

How did the raid fail?

Halfway to Johannesburg, Boers started harassing Jameson's rearguard, but failed to halt his eastward march. Nearing Krugersdorp on January 2, 1896, at Doornkop the raiders followed the track up a steep 400ft incline, from where, across a valley, they saw a ridge held by several hundred Boers. At around 1600hrs, at a range of 1,900 yards, Jameson's seven-pounders fired shrapnel shells at the Boer positions, but with no response.

Taking this as indication the Boers had evacuated their stronghold, Colonel Henry White with 100 mounted MMP troops charged the Boer line. However, with only 200 yards to go, the riders became bogged down in cloying marshland, and 300 Boers directed decimating fire into man and horse. By the time the survivors stumbled back, 60 men were dead, wounded or captured.

Astonishingly, Jameson continued his doomed expedition and harboured at the homestead on the nearby Vlakfontein Farm. They were soon surrounded and, struggling to find water to cool the Maxims, five of them jammed. The Boers' Staats Artillerie had now arrived and were pounding Jameson's men with their Krupp guns. Outnumbered six to one, the invaders capitulated, but it wasn't Jameson who ran out the white flag. The raiders sustained 16 killed (all from the MMP), 56 wounded and 35 missing. The Boers had four killed and five wounded.

What became of Jameson?

On January 20, 1896, Jameson and 13 officers were shipped to England on the SS *Victoria* to stand trial in London. At the Old Bailey that July, Jameson was found guilty of attacking "the dominion of a friendly state", and given a jail sentence of 15 months, which he served at Wormwood Scrubs and Holloway Prison. He was released after only four months.

Returning to South Africa, Jameson entered politics and became prime minister of the Cape Colony from 1904 to 1908. At this time, he was very active in the lobby for a union of the Transvaal and Orange Free State Boer republics with the two British colonies, the Cape and Natal. This included an invitation to Balmoral Castle to discuss the issue with King Edward VII. Following the creation of the Union of South Africa in 1910, Jameson was rewarded with a Baronetcy. He died in London on November 26, 1917. In 1920, his remains were moved to Rhodesia and reburied a few yards from Cecil Rhodes' grave in the Matopo Hills near Bulawayo, Zimbabwe. BW

Field Post

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The last victory

I picked up a copy of the December issue of *BAW* during a recent trip to England, and much enjoyed reading it on the long flight back to Johannesburg. I was struck by the coincidence of the mention of the war in the Dodecanese in several unconnected features. I refer to the feature about the discovery of the submarine HMS *Trooper* off the island of Donoussa and the news item about the medal awarded to a Royal Marine for the canoe attack on shipping in Leros.

It is probably not well known that the battles in the Dodecanese, fought between September-November 1943, marked probably the last significant German victories of World War Two. They were a real reverse for the Allies, with some painful naval casualties and heavy losses to the army and air elements sent to occupy the islands, notably on Kos and Leros.

Based there were detachments of two Spitfire Squadrons, one being 7 Squadron, South African Air Force, under Major Corrie van Vliet. It had a number of successful combats, claiming a dozen German aircraft shot down before being overwhelmed. Like the rest of the garrison, it had to make its way individually to Turkey or Cyprus to avoid capture. In all, 7 Squadron lost six officers killed and 15 other ranks missing. Their story would make a great feature for your most enjoyable magazine. 'n Afrikaans dankie!

Johan van Renburg

A 7 Squadron, SAAF, Spitfire Mk.Vc, serial JG895, at Tingaki, Kos, circa September 1943
VIA MIKE SCHOEMANN

Forgotten great

I enjoyed the editor's diversion into the history of Royal Navy ship names (*Debrief, BAW*, November 2024). Several names of note were mentioned, but I was surprised to learn that the most common ship name in the Royal Navy was HMS *Swallow*. However, I was not surprised to see that one of my personal favourites was not included.

There have been seven British ships named HMS *Chameleon* (or *Cameleon* and *Camelion*) – named for the often-misunderstood clade of Old World lizards – and one of my favourite warships is the 1795-comissioned Diligence-class 18-gun brig-sloop *Chameleon*, which had a tremendous career.

Serving throughout the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, *Chameleon* captured some 30 vessels, including the privateer *Souffleur* –more if her shared captures are included in her tally. She also participated in the sieges of Savona and Genoa in 1800. In 1801, she supported the British expedition to Egypt, participating in the landings that subsequently led to the capture of Alexandria. After that she housed Count François Antoine 'Charles' Lallemand, the French general captured during the campaign, as a POW.

Chameleon's final encounter with an enemy was as rip-roaring as the rest of her career. On August 15, 1805, she encountered a Spanish 74-gun ship-of-the-line and threw her arms and stores overboard in an effort to escape, while HMS *Beagle* attempted to take her in tow. With the Spaniard gaining, a group of four unknown ships was spotted to the southwest and the British signalled to them as if they were friendly warships. The ruse worked, and the Spanish turned away – with *Beagle* and *Chameleon* giving chase!

I know the subject is a little beyond what normally runs in *BAW*, but surely readers would love to see the *Chameleon*'s story expanded on in one of the title's occasional forays into pre-20th Century history?

James Emmett

Bravo Blackett

On the subject of Royal Navy ship names, I'd like to highlight the story behind the name of one of the service's newest ships: the XV *Patrick Blackett*.

Although she sails under the Blue –not White – Ensign, *Patrick Blackett* first went to sea with its RN crew in February 2023. She is a testbed for new technologies, including unmanned surface/underwater vehicles.

Blackett, a naval officer, fought at the Battle of the Falkland Islands and at Jutland, but is best remembered for his science. In 1916, aged just 19, he co-designed a gunnery aid and then studied maths and physics at Cambridge, graduating in 1921. He worked with Ernest Rutherford and briefly supervised J Robert Oppenheimer – it is Blackett that the latter allegedly attempted to poison.

Blackett supported the introduction of radar and helped develop the RAF's Mark XIV bombsight. He also argued that the strategic bombing of Germany was inefficient given the quantity of resources expended on it. However, it was when he served on the MAUD Committee that he had his greatest influence, concluding that the prospect of developing an atomic bomb in Britain was possible, but disagreeing that it could be done within the desired timeframe. He recommended the Americans be brought in.

Blackett was recognised in 1948 with the Nobel Prize, awarded for his investigation of cosmic rays using his counter-controlled cloud chamber. He died in 1974 and now his wartime role has been honoured by a pioneering vessel bearing his name.

Harry Lewellyn

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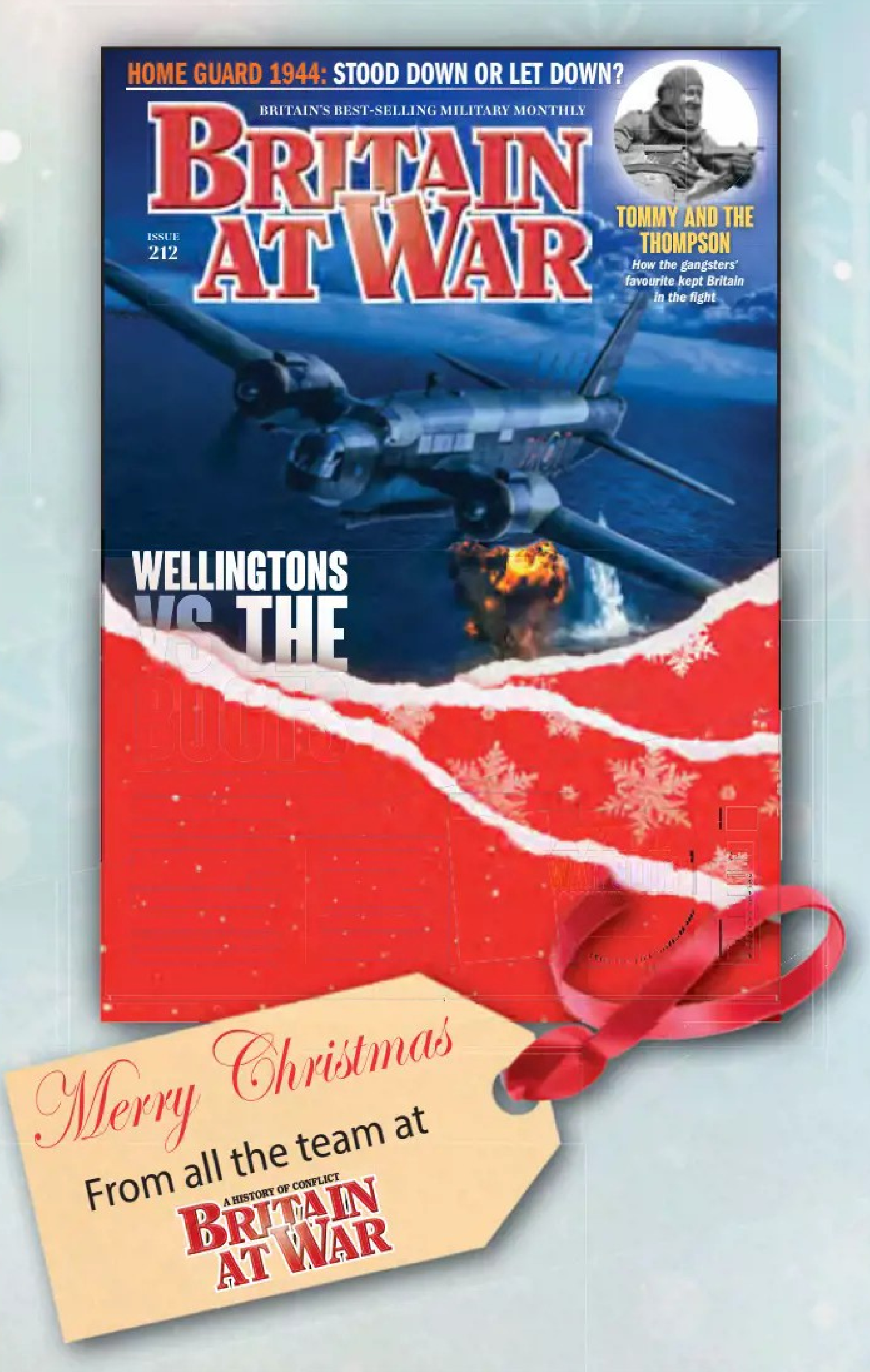
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FROM BRUM TO BRILLIANCE

John Stackhouse traces the history of a single Spitfire Mk.Vb, a remarkable airframe that met the King and made newsreel history

Based on gun camera stills taken by BM155, a depiction of Flight Sergeant Robson's moment of victory on May 4, 1942 ANTONIS KARIDIS

Spitfire Mk.Vb BM155 sat at Castle Bromwich, Birmingham, having emerged from the aircraft factory with the 'thumbs up' as being airworthy. Signed off to an ATA pilot from 16 Ferry Pilot Pool, Kirkbride, Cumbria, she was flown there for final checks. Fourteen days later, she winged her way to her new home with 602 (City of Glasgow) Squadron at RAF Kenley, south of London.

On arrival on March 27, 1942, the aircraft was transferred almost immediately to 485 Squadron, due to recent losses. BM155 OU-U was sponsored by Joe and Roy Davies of Davies Brothers Company Ltd, Leyton, London, hence her title, *Joe and Roy*. Many 485 Squadron aircraft at this time were presentation machines, funded mainly through sponsorships and donations.

MORE MAGAZINES XSAVA.XYZ

Spring 1942 was a dark time for the squadron as its losses mounted. On April 6, 1942, her first day of operations, BM155 was entrusted to Pilot Officer L Ralph on a convoy patrol, then another later in the evening with Pilot Officer Pattison.– In April alone, the Spitfire flew on eight fighter sweeps, ten bomber escorts, an air-sea rescue and one patrol. Her guns were fired in anger for the first time on April 24, when 485 Squadron jumped Focke-Wulf Fw 190s on a Kenley and Tangmere Wing operation. Although Ralph's aim was off the mark, his squadron comrades did claim three Fw 190s destroyed.

April and May 1942 were to prove her busiest months, with April 7 proving to be significant as being the day the tall, lean figure of Sergeant Anthony 'Slim' Robson climbed up onto BM155's wing and squeezed into the cockpit with the aid of one of the groundcrew. He was pleased to be assigned a new machine for his 16th operation, an uneventful patrol between Beachy Head and Dungeness. It was the first of 51 sorties in a partnership between the New Zealand farmer and Spitfire BM155.

BM155's nineteenth operation, with Robson at the stick, proved eventful. That evening, Robson and others took off to escort Boston light bombers on a mission to Lille but encountered concentrated flak. On the return leg, Robson was escorting a damaged Boston when a Fw 190 appeared. Breaking away, Robson managed to get in behind the attacker, which dived and banked. The German had made a serious error, and Robson turned inside him, closed the distance and fired two bursts. His cannon and machine gun rounds hit home and he was forced to steer evasively to avoid colliding with the steeply diving 190. Robson watched as his opponent's machine continue to dive until he pulled away at about 2,000ft. He did not see it crash. A parting burst at another distant fighter caused no apparent damage, but the German diverted his approach. Robson was able to see the stricken Boston home and the first Fw 190 was claimed as 'probably destroyed'.

'Star' of the big screen

Kenley was a hive of activity on April 29, with 485, 602 (City of Glasgow) Squadrons and 457 (Australian) Squadron at Redhill in 'spruce-up' mode. A secret VIP was coming. Various guesses as to the identity of the visitor were suggested as people speculated, but the words "The King" were uttered and quickly took root.

The pilots were drawn together in the morning by Wing Leader Robert Boyd and Kenley Station commander Group Captain Richard 'Batch' Atcherley. Both men impressed the importance of the occasion, leaving no doubt that the honour of the Kenley Wing and the Station sat squarely on the pilots' shoulders. The VIP would witness an operation from start to finish by listening in on their conversations in the air. The top brass demanded a perfect performance from all three squadrons.

This was a big deal for the Kenley, Biggin Hill and Northolt Wings. The aircraft would assemble, complete a quick hop across the English Channel, perform an uneventful sweep a couple of miles inland and return. The VIP would witness the take-off, listen to the operation on comms and watch the wing land. The airmen were reminded that their radio language was to be measured and polite, but the squadron commanders quietly doubted their pilots' ability to avoid verbal indiscretions, uneventful sweep or not!

Unfortunately, the VIP – who was indeed King George VI – was delayed, so the Kenley Wing's faultless take-off was not seen by him. Nevertheless, the operational 'script' and protocols were

Five of 485 Squadron's pilots at Kenley in mid-1942: Mackie (standing, from left), Robson and Palmer, with Hume and Griffith (seated, from left) USNA

Squadron Leader Reg Grant, the officer commanding 485 Squadron between May 1942 and January 1943 VIA C F SHORES

followed perfectly. The Kenley boys rendezvoused with the other wings and the sweep over France was on. They headed out over the Channel and, for the first few minutes, all seemed to be going well. However, as His Majesty arrived in the Kenley operations room, things changed dramatically when the fighters of Jagdgeschwader 26 appeared 'off-script' and proved keen to engage the three-wing swarm of Spitfires. The Germans soon got among them and the carefully pre-arranged mission staged for royal consumption devolved into utter chaos.

The pilots' radio communications rapidly degenerated from measured and sanitised chatter to urgent, expletive-rich commentary. The King's ears burned as frenetic dogfights erupted and the newly promoted Fighter Command C-in-C, Air Marshal Sholto Douglas, shifted uneasily as the airwaves crackled from north of Boulogne to Cap Gris Nez and Calais. Immediately engrossed, the King commented with a wry smile: "I have heard two blasts and two blanks already!"

The formations broke up, the aircraft returning in sections or individually. First of the 485 Spitfires back on the ground was Robson in BM155. He sat momentarily, exhausted, a sigh of relief, sweat trickling. He clambered out, untangling his lean frame from his machine just as the second 485 Spitfire returned. Robson removed his flying helmet, slid off the wing and was taken by surprise by who was approaching his aircraft.

Quickly collecting himself, Robson somehow conveyed a reasonably calm exterior as he found himself standing before the King. The snappers clicked and the film cameras rolled, BM155 providing an appropriate impromptu backdrop to the King's conversation with its pilot. She was now attended to by studious ground crew preparing her for the next op, while

Armourers reloading the machine guns on a 485 Squadron Spitfire Mk.Vb at Kenley VIA ANDREW THOMAS

BM155 serving as the backdrop for the King's conversation with Robson ROBSON ALBUM/AUTHOR

Robson and King George VI ROBSON ALBUM/AUTHOR

also getting a good view of the King and his entourage.

The King asked about the operation and Robson, having barely gathered his wits, described what had happened to him: "I saw a Fw 190 over me. I pulled up the nose and gave him a squirt and saw him dive down with smoke pouring out, but I didn't stay to see whether it crashed." The King smiled and replied: "Good. I hope you got it."

By this time, other 485 pilots had returned and so Robson, a man of few words, could relax a little as the attention shifted elsewhere. Subsequently, Robson and BM155 appeared in a widely distributed newsreel and in British and New Zealand newspapers.

Making the news

It was not the pair's sole mass media appearance. Having damaged another Fw 190 on May 1, BM155 and Robson were in action again two days later. This was to cause quite a stir, with the film he produced using BM155's gun camera becoming quite a publicity coup.

Flying a Kenley Wing operation led by 485 Squadron's CO 'Hawkeye' Wells, a Kiwi ace, the wing had not even assembled before they were attacked by four Fw 190s. This broke up the squadron's formation, but the wing continued its sweep. It was 602 Squadron that was first to draw the attention of Fw 190s, above the Forêt de Boulogne, brushing with 20 of them. This was possibly the same formation that later attacked 485.

Robson picked out a German, keeping him in sight, and dived down behind. With his thumb hovering over the firing button, he waited until the fighter loomed large. BM155 shuddered as he fired two bursts, the Fw 190 staggering in the air. Sticking with it, Robson consumed the rest of his ammunition.

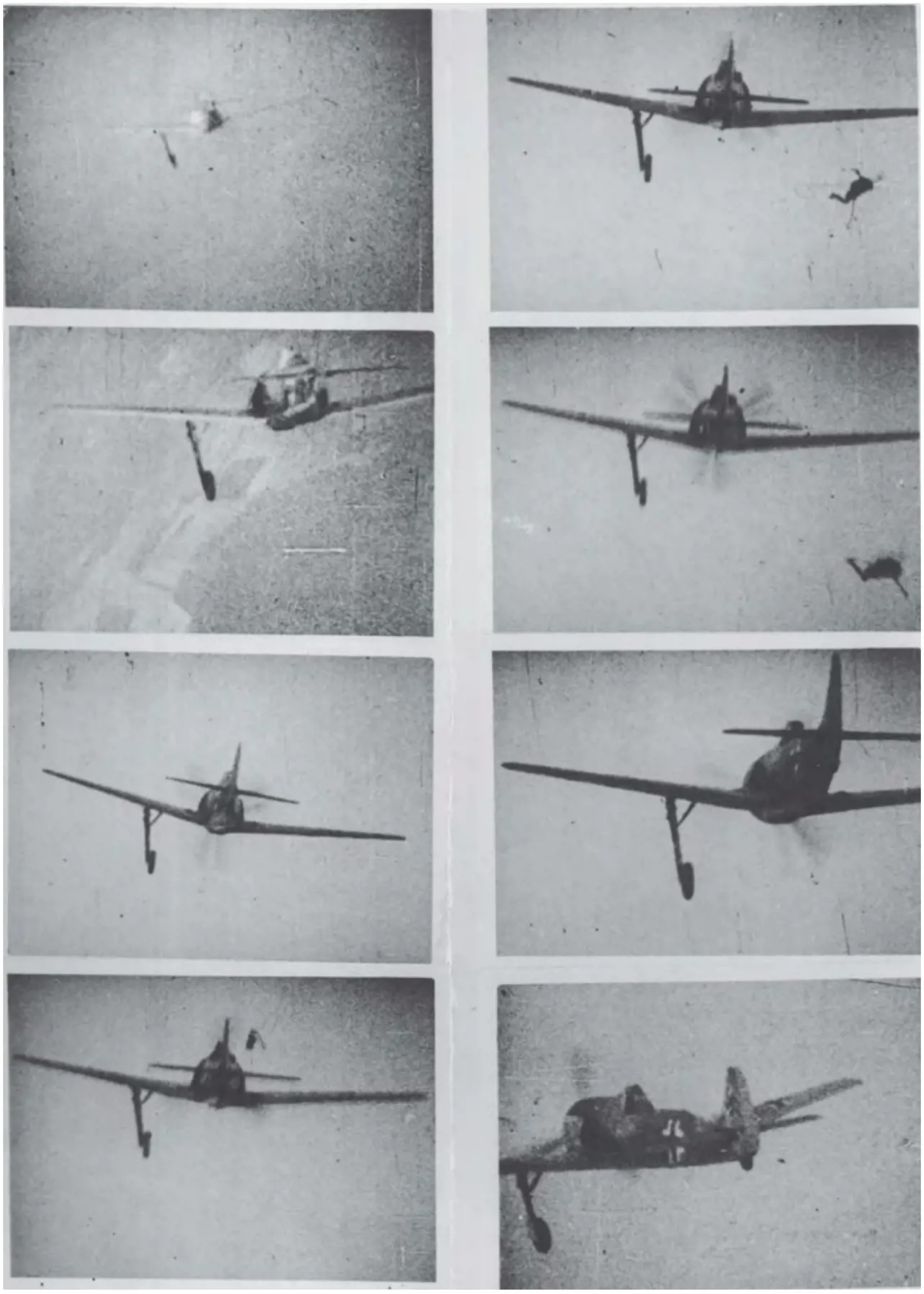
Robson reported: "I saw one of the wheels of Jerry's undercarriage come down and the cockpit hood fly off, and the pilot's helmet come out of the cockpit... When I last saw the aircraft it was flying at 2,000ft with one wing down."

Robson claimed the Fw 190 as "probably destroyed" and the newspapers latched onto this, headlines above still frames saying: "This was only a 'probable".

However, the backroom boys of the photographic unit were stunned by what they saw on Robson's gun camera footage, which revealed a sequence of clear images from his first strikes on the Fw 190 to the pilot baling out. This series of stills told the whole story of the demise of one Fw 190, which at the time was the nemesis of the Spitfire.

From the camera evidence, the Fw 190 was confirmed 'destroyed'. Its pilot, Willi Heilmann, ended the war a 34-victory ace, lucky to have survived the guns of BM155 that day.

The film was recognised as a potential publicity coup for the Air Ministry and the Ministry of Information, and was soon on its way to become part of a cinema newsreel. Sholto Douglas provided the narrative, stressing how the RAF was



taking the war to the Germans with regular, effective sweeps ranging into occupied Europe, focusing on the much-vaunted Fw 190 being on the receiving end. Ever since, the footage has been acclaimed as one of the best gun camera films of aerial combat.

Spitfire BM155 and 'Slim' Robson had hit the silver screen and newspapers twice in quick succession. He took more flak from the 485 Squadron boys than he had taken from the Germans, but at least he could reply that he was shooting a film and not shooting a line. Robson was awarded the DFM, announced in June 1942, with the published citation highlighting: "From the start he has shown both courage and determination in his desire to engage the enemy."

Soon after this announcement, Robson was commissioned. He later collected his DFM from the King. Although the brief words exchanged between the two at the investiture are not recorded, it can be assumed that the sovereign would have recalled his earlier visit to 485 Squadron.

A close scrape

In May, BM155 completed 24 operations, but the Spitfire Mk.V was clearly outmatched by the Fw 190 and RAF losses were mounting. However, 485 Squadron continued to fly its Mk.Vs and was not re-equipped with the more powerful variants hurriedly entering service.

On May 30 and 31, the Kenley Wing undertook two sweeps over France. The second – to Abbeville – included an encounter with 30 Fw 190s. Robson's good friend, Pilot Officer Doug Brown, described BM155's close scrapes that day: "We were over France and the first sign I saw of the Hun was a Spit spinning down from above us, and then they were right on our tail. Tony Robson and I broke, and there we were with eight or more Jerries – I thought we had had it. Tony fired off a fair bit and thought he got one."

"I saw one of the wheels of Jerry's undercarriage come down and the cockpit hood fly off, and the pilot's helmet come out of the cockpit... When I last saw the aircraft it was flying at 2,000ft"

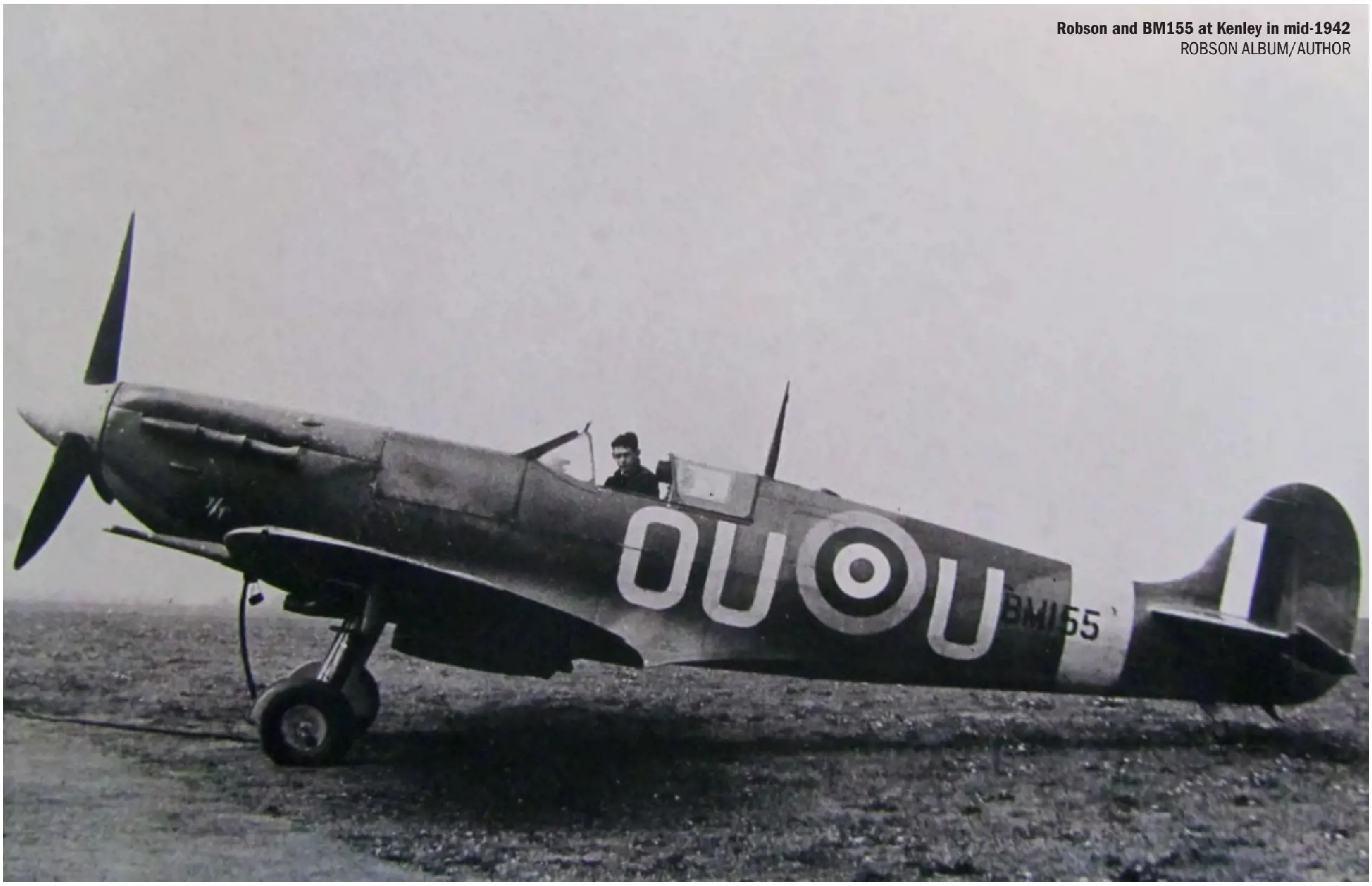
Brown disengaged and escaped into cloud, but he had to break clear again as he met another Fw 190 flying in the opposite direction. He recalled: "I was in no mood for a scrap, but neither was he, so I headed smartly for the sea and headed home on the deck with no holes at all. I was worried about Tony. I left him with six Jerries, and I was jolly glad when he got back, though he had a few holes in the aeroplane."

The squadron lost two aircraft that day, but both pilots evaded capture and later returned to England. BM155 and Robson were fortunate not to have been the third casualty, the tail wheel having been shot away as he eluded a gaggle of fighters, eventually landing at Lympne.

In June, BM155 completed 14 operations. Then, in early July, the squadron shifted from the hotspot of Kenley for a rest period at Kings Cliffe, Northamptonshire. BM155 flew just three uneventful sorties that month.

The tempo of action increased in August to 14 operations, the month punctuated by Operation Jubilee, the costly amphibious raid on Dieppe. The aircraft flew four sorties over Dieppe that day as the RAF maintained a heavy schedule of fighter sorties to cover the landing and withdrawal. Doug Brown was at the controls on the first Dieppe sortie: "We got off about eight as cover and ran into a hornet's nest, which comprised

Doug Brown knew Robson well and reflected on their close scrapes. He also flew BM155's first sortie over Dieppe during the ill-fated raid ROBSON ALBUM/AUTHOR



Robson and BM155 at Kenley in mid-1942
ROBSON ALBUM/AUTHOR

Fw 190s. I didn't fire my guns. I only had one chance of doing so, and thought better of it as my foe had a friend!"

Robson flew two uneventful operations over Dieppe at 1120hrs and 1405hrs. BM155's final Dieppe mission was flown by Sergeant Leighton Montgomerie, during which almost the entire squadron unsuccessfully pursued a lone Dornier Do 217 bomber.

Retirement

The rest of August for BM155 comprised just five operations. The nature of the air war had changed and the Spitfire Mk.Vs were unable to take the fight to the Fw 190s, so the RAF progressively replaced them with the Spitfire Mk.IX. This began to reach the squadrons from June 1942 and, with its significantly more powerful Merlin 61 engine and two-stage supercharger, it was a match in performance to the roving German machine, but with the important advantage of greater manoeuvrability.

BM155's days as a frontline fighter were numbered. In September, it completed three escort operations and two low-level Operation Rhubarb sorties over France. Robson flew her on September 1, while the other three pilots on this Rhubarb – Black, Metcalfe and Riley – had all previously flown her. The trip across to the Netherlands went without a hitch, but after several low-level attacks on barges, Flight Sergeant Riley said calmly "I've been hit" and they returned without him. He was later captured.

> ***"The nature of the air war had changed and the Spitfire Mk.Vs were unable to take the fight to the Fw 190s, so the RAF progressively replaced them with the Spitfire Mk.IX"***

Five more sorties over France were completed by BM155, the last a two-hour convoy patrol flown by Robson on October 27, after which she was taken off operations seemingly due to damage sustained in mid-October. Repaired and turned over to 45 Maintenance Unit at RAF Kinloss on December 7, this was the beginning of a brief period of second tier operations. Robson was sad to lose BM155, the OU-U designation transferred to his new machine.

BM155 reappeared on 64 Squadron's roster, operating out of RAF Ayr on the Firth of Clyde. Undertaking just five operations in July 1943, she was flown by Flight Lieutenant Cliff Vos once and Sergeant J Gunn four times. On October 31, she was transferred to 315 Squadron, but passed on to 303 (Polish) Squadron. She undertook non-operational flights as that squadron settled at RAF Ballyhalbert in Northern Ireland. After two uneventful convoy patrols, both flown by Flying Officer Adam Jenik, BM155 was struck off charge.

After upgrade work and servicing, BM155 was ready for the final phase of her service life, relegated to three Operational

Sergeant L Montgomerie (shown in 1944 as a flying officer) flew BM155 during the 1942 Dieppe Raid
VIA ANDREW THOMAS

Training Units, delighting trainee pilots with the adrenalin rush of flying such an iconic aircraft. However, none would have known the eventful history of the' Spitfire nor the men who had flown her.

BM155 met her official end on January 14, 1946, when she was struck off charge for a final time and converted to parts. She had exceeded the average wartime life expectancy for an RAF fighter, usually measured in months. Unlike many of her peers, she had not become Focke-Wulf fodder, having survived at least 93 combat sorties across three years and ten months. It would be nice to think that at least a part or two of BM155, the Spitfire that met the king, remains in existence, possible as components of one of the dozens of restored Spitfires around the world. BW

The author would like to dedicate this article to the 26 pilots who flew Spitfire BM155 on operations, in particular the three who died on active service.

A group of 485 Squadron airmen and staff at RAF Kenley. From L to R: (on wings) Clouston, Liken, Goodlet and Palmer; (on engine) Robson and Gaskin; (standing) Shaw, Mackie, McNeil, Crawford-Compton, Hume, Pattison, Rae, Kilian, Wells, Gibbs, Russell and Shand; (front) Brown, Checketts, Browne and Leckie VIA ANDREW THOMAS

SPITFIRE Mk.Vb BM155'S OPERATIONAL PILOTS

Rank/name:	Awards:	Service:
No.485 Squadron:		
Air Marshal Sir Richard Atcherley	KBE, CB, AFC & bar, MiD, War Cross	RAF
Flight Lieutenant Anthony Robson [POW]	DFM	RNZAF
Flight Lieutenant Colin Chrystal [POW]	DFC	RAF/RNZAF
Flight Lieutenant John Falls [POW]	N/A	RNZAF
Flight Lieutenant Leighton Montgomerie [KIA, Aug 27, 1944]	DFC/ MiD	RNZAF
Flight Lieutenant Lindsay Black	DFC	RNZAF
Flight Lieutenant Lloyd Ralph	DFC	RNZAF
Flight Lieutenant Lyndon Griffith	DFC	RNZAF
Flight Lieutenant Michael Shand [POW, Great Escaper]	DFC	RNZAF
Flying Officer Hector Leckie [POW]	N/A	RNZAF
Flying Officer Murray Metcalfe [KIA, Sep 16, 1943]	N/A	RNZAF
Flying Officer Royce de Tourett	N/A	RNZAF
Group Captain Richard Webb	DSO, DFC, MiD	RNZAF
Pilot Officer John Palmer [POW]	N/A	RNZAF
Sergeant Matthew McLeod [KIA, Aug 2, 1942]	N/A	RNZAF
Sergeant Richard Riley [POW]	N/A	RNZAF
Squadron Leader David Henry	DFC, MiD	RNZAF
Squadron Leader Douglas Elliot	MiD	RNZAF
Squadron Leader Irvine Maskill	DFC	RNZAF
Squadron Leader John Pattison	DSO, DFC	RNZAF
Squadron Leader Keith Macdonald	DFC	RNZAF
Squadron Leader Martin Hume	DFC	RNZAF
Wing Commander Ewan Mackie [Ace]	DSO, DFC & Bar, DFC (US)	RNZAF
No.64 Squadron:		
Sergeant J Gunn	N/A	RAF
Squadron Leader Clifford Vos [POW]	DFC	RAF
No.303 (Polish) Squadron:		
Flight Lieutenant (Kapitan) Adam Jenik	MC & three clasps (Poland)	RAF

Robson was responsible for all of BM155's victory claims ROBSON ALBUM/AUTHOR

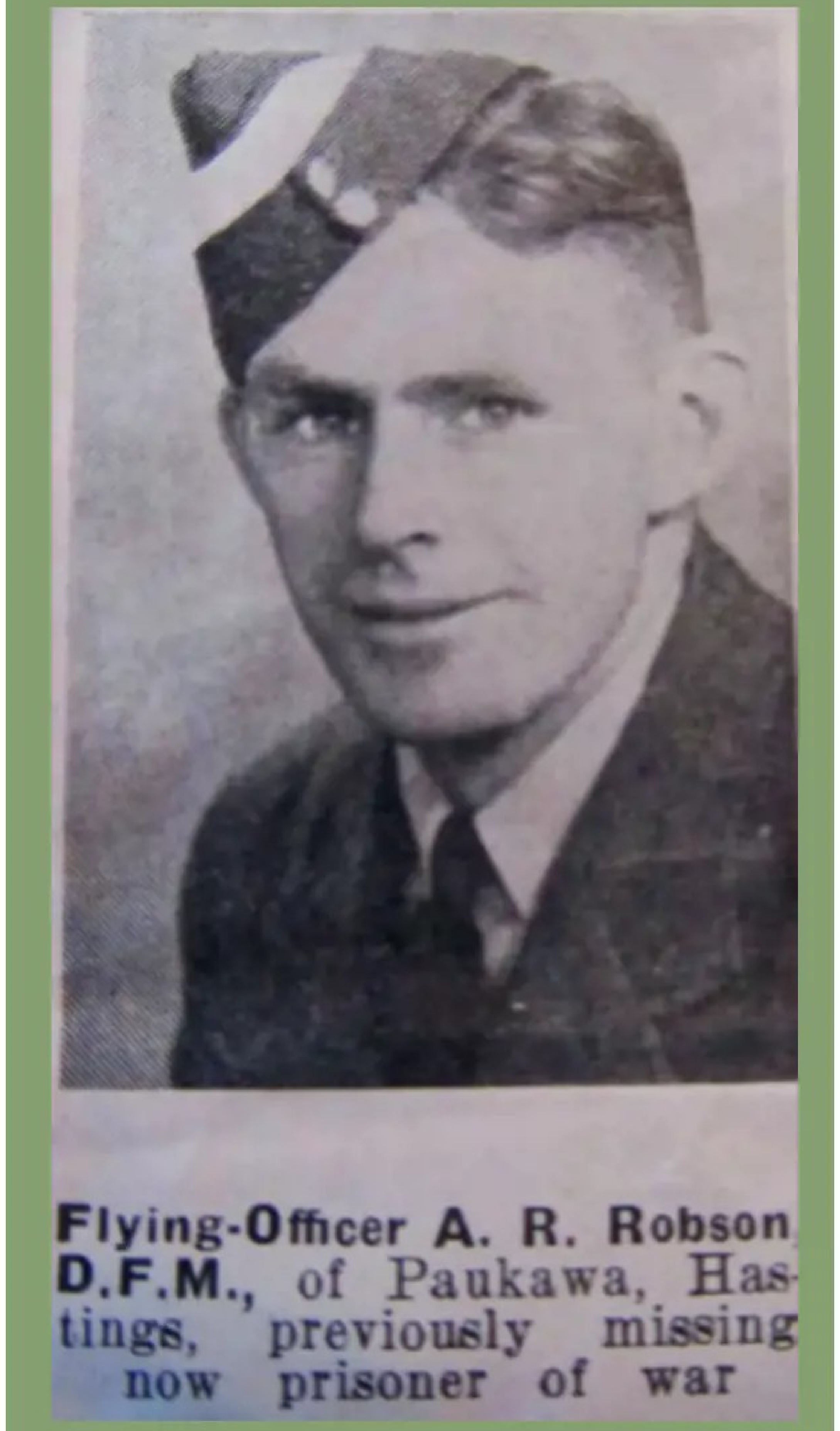
Flight Lieutenant Pattison (centre) recounts his combat with an enemy fighter to Squadron Leader Reg Grant (left) and Flight Lieutenant R Baker IWM/GETTY

WHAT HAPPENED TO ANTHONY 'SLIM' ROBSON?

Sergeant, later Flight Lieutenant, Anthony Robson was BM155's star pilot, claiming all of the victories achieved in the aircraft, amounting to one destroyed, one probably destroyed and two damaged.

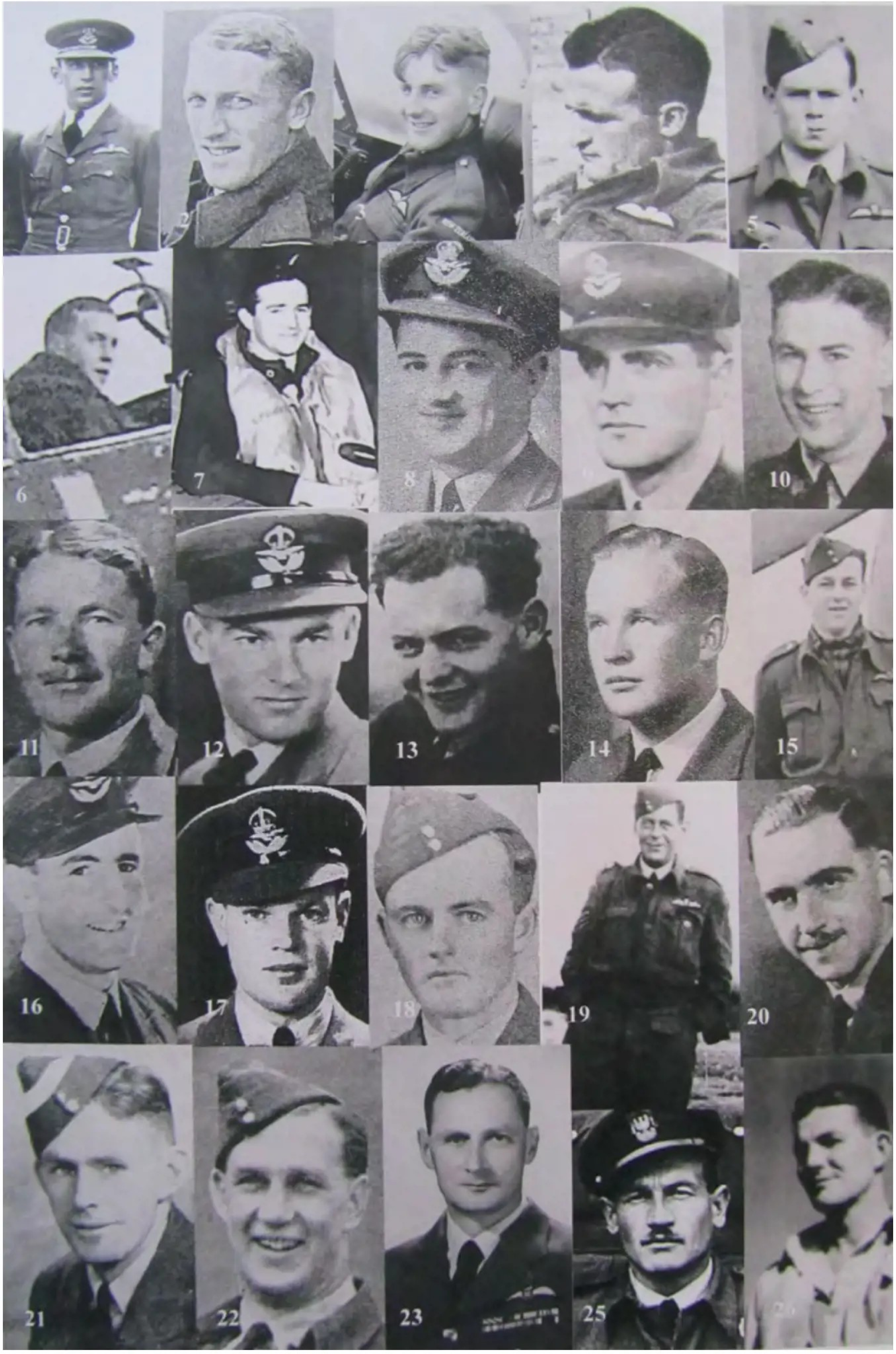
After BM155's departure, Robson took Spitfire Mk.Vb EP107, completing just seven operations in this new machine. On his 90th operation – a rodeo over France – 485 Squadron attacked Fw 190s that were protecting a German vessel near Boulogne, shooting down two of them. However, in the ensuing dogfight, the squadron lost three of their own. Flying Officer Grant (the brother of 485's CO, Reg Grant) and Sergeant R Steed were both killed. Robson crash-landed near Hardelot, his engine having been damaged. He was captured and spent the remainder of the war in Stalag Luft III, Sagan, surviving the notorious death march of January-April 1945.

He was repatriated to England in May 1945 and was selected as one of the RNZAF contingent present at the June 1946 Victory Parade in London. He returned to farming near the tiny settlement of Poukawa, near Hastings in Hawkes Bay, New Zealand, where he and his wife Lyn raised a family. He died on April 4, 1991.



Flying-Officer A. R. Robson D.F.M., of Paukawa, Hastings, previously missing now prisoner of war

A newspaper clipping confirming that Robson had been captured WEEKLY NEWS/AUTHOR



LEFT: **A collage of the faces of 25 of the 26 pilots who flew Spitfire BM155. Sadly, no photograph showing 64 Squadron's Sergeant J Gunn has been found**

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BITTER BURE

As the Battle of the Bulge raged, a British parachute battalion rushed into a snow-covered Belgian village to meet German resistance that proved far stiffer than expected

Words: **John Ash**

For the Americans, the Battle of the Bulge – the last major German offensive on the Western Front during World War Two, fought between December 16, 1944, and January 28, 1945 – has acquired legendary status.

It is the dogged endurance showed by the men of the 101st Airborne Division, elements of the 9th and 10th Armoured Divisions, the 705th Tank Destroyer Battalion, and other units encircled at Bastogne that has perhaps become the best-known aspect of this ostensibly 'American' battle. Equally celebrated is the pithy response to the ultimatum for those trapped in Bastogne to surrender: General Anthony McAuliffe's legendary "Nuts!"

Reputedly, the acting commander of the 101st crumpled the message and threw it into a bin, muttering "aw, nuts", instead of something sterner – McAuliffe rarely swore. His reply was handed to the Germans by Colonel Joseph Harper of the 327th Glider Infantry Regiment, and a legend was born. To relieve confusion from German faces, Harper offered the more direct "go to Hell".

The actions of the 101st at Bastogne has aided in the construction a largely justified, albeit part-mythical, reputation. Indeed, elite light-role infantry thrust against a fanatical foe supported by heavy armour builds an appealing picture of glory and determination – one in many respects correct. The 101st certainly earned its glory, but it was not the sole airborne unit thrust into action in the Ardennes – nor was it the only one to experience a hard fight. About a week after Bastogne's relief, some 27 miles to the west, a British parachute battalion advanced into Bure, a Belgian village, and encountered some of the heaviest fighting seen during the whole Ardennes offensive.

"About a week after Bastogne's relief, a British parachute battalion advanced into Bure and encountered some of the heaviest fighting seen during the whole offensive"

Panzergrenadiers of SS Kampfgruppe Hansen move through an American position in Poteau, December 18, 1944. The surprise attack through the Ardennes briefly had the Allies on the back foot NARA

When the German spearheads smashed through American lines, three US airborne divisions, the 101st, 82nd and the 17th, were in position to intervene. Each was part of the First Allied Airborne Army, a force that after September 1944's Operation Market Garden had been held in strategic reserve. When battle erupted in the Ardennes, all three divisions were rushed into the line.

A 6th Airborne Division sniper on patrol in the Ardennes, wearing a snow camouflage suit. Snipers, artillery and machine guns dominated the action at Bure IWM B13676

That army's fourth component, the British 6th Airborne Division, was not quite as ready to be thrown into the fray. It was in England, recuperating after a bitter D-Day drop and a bruising Normandy campaign during which it sustained 4,500 casualties. It had only retired to Britain in September, having fought almost continuously since June 6, 1944. The division had been withdrawn just three weeks before the massive airborne component of Operation Market Garden was deployed, so missed out on that action.

Instead, the 6th was sourcing replacements and training hard, learning the skills necessary in the expected chaos of the house-to-house fighting anticipated as the Allies crossed the Rhine and advanced into Germany. Their training ground could be little better, as the men honed their tactics in bombed parts of Southampton and Birmingham.

Christmas rush

After its training regime concluded with Exercise Eve (an assault on the River Thames), the division was expecting a quiet Christmas. Its new, somewhat unexpected commander, Major-General Eric Bols, would not have foreseen what lay ahead.

Bols had never held senior field command before, but replaced Major-General Richard Gale, the division's first commander and who had been elevated to lead I British Airborne Corps and simultaneously be the deputy commander of the First Allied Airborne Army.

When news of the massive offensive – Wacht Am Rhein – through the Ardennes broke, Britain's 21st Army Group was committed to stabilising the Allied position during what became the largest single battle on the Western Front during World War Two. Some 55,000 Brits and Canadians were redeployed, forming about 10% of the Allied strength in the battle. Field Marshal Montgomery's movements to protect key routes and bridges were part of a stabilisation effort that later facilitated a counter push involving his units and those of US General Patton to the south.

The 6th Airborne was attached to XXX Corps and sent to help contain, and then squeeze out, the Bulge salient. The division arrived in Calais and Ostend by

Major General Eric Bols replaced General Gale in command of the 6th Airborne Division OFFICIAL PHOTOGRAPH

Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery checks a map with Major General Matthew Ridgway, GOC US 18th Airborne Division, during the Battle of the Bulge. Monty's forces were rushed into stabilise the front and he was controversially appointed to command the (largely American) Allied forces on the northern flank IWM EA49926

A Vickers machine gun team in action in the Ardennes, judging by the empty belt, they have had a busy time. Note the marks from the censor hiding their unit insignia ROGER VIOLETT/TOPFOTO

ship and was sent forward, where, on Christmas Day, it took its place in the line. By Boxing Day, the 6th held the front between Dinant and Namur. Before long, XXX Corps was tasked with launching a counterattack, with the corps to clear the Germans from the east of Dinant, Rochefort, Grupont and Bure.

The latter, about halfway between Dinant and Bastogne, would be host to a bitter action that, so small against the wider battle, has been overlooked even by those who have proudly served in The Parachute Regiment since. However, the men of the 13th (Lancashire) Parachute Battalion who advanced into that snow-covered village, could never forget it. The battle was as bloody as it was brief, one veteran describing Bure – and not Normandy – as "our biggest little battle of the war in Europe, [which] I did not guess was going to be the toughest."

In 1944's final days, XXX Corps repositioned units along the River Meuse, occupying positions in a dense, snow-covered forest dotted with chateaus. Poor weather prevented aerial reconnaissance and so the 61st Reconnaissance Regiment, together with French and Belgian SAS sections, ranged into the bogs and forests.

According to historian Sir Antony Beevor, the Belgian SAS, patrolling in Vickers-armed Jeeps, encountered the Panzer-Lehr-Division at Bure. Three men were killed by an 8.8cm gun in a series of engagements. Bure had taken on new significance. As the Battle of the Bulge turned, elements of three German armoured divisions, the 2. and 9. Panzer-Divisions and the Panzer-Lehr, were falling back through the village from Rochefort.

XXX Corps was rushed into positions protecting the River Meuse. This Sherman 'Firefly' is shown on the riverside at Namur. Shermans of the Fife and Forfar Yeomanry later provided invaluable support to the paratroops at Bure OFFICIAL PHOTOGRAPH

The Tiger in the town

At 1300hrs on January 3, 1945, the 13th Parachute Battalion began its advance towards the village. The day prior, the CO of the 5th Parachute Brigade, Brigadier Joseph (Nigel) Poett DSO, ordered the battalion to attack Bure and break through to Grupont. Resistance was expected to be light, and the unit would be supported by the tanks of the Fife and Forfar Yeomanry.

As the paratroopers marched from Resteigne through 2ft of snow, mortar rounds started to crash around them and as they closed on the village, machine guns and StuG assault guns opened fire. At this time, the paras were unsupported but despite the casualties sustained (already 28 men) the battalion's 'A' Company entered Bure. Major John (Jack) Watson (see 'Bravery at Bure') was leading the company into action for the first time, but "disregarding the enemy fire, ran up and down the line, reorganising the forming up, and by his personal leadership and example enabled the attack to be launched".

"He led them several hundred yards down a slope and stormed into the village, in spite of fire from enemy machine guns from the nearest houses. Once in the village he kept the company moving forward clearing the houses, constantly moving himself from place to place, with complete disregard for enemy fire, and continually encouraging his men."

'B' Company secured the nearby high ground before it too entered Bure. 'C' Company remained in reserve. By nightfall, despite substantial losses, both companies had entered the village and held about half of it. That evening, 'C' Company moved to join them while British artillery had set up and

British paratroopers in white overalls dive into the ground as a mortar round explodes ahead of them AIRBORNE ASSAULT MUSEUM

Brigadier Nigel Poett led the 5th Parachute Brigade during the Battle of Bure and sent the 13th Battalion into the village IWM H40778

British paratroopers don white camo suits before going on patrol. Note the captured Kübelwagen AIRBORNE ASSAULT MUSEUM

> *"The fighting was increasingly desperate – 'A' Company called down artillery on its own positions in a frantic effort to prevent it from being overrun"*

the Yeomanry Shermans had arrived. However, in German eyes, Bure was too important to abandon.

Drawing fire

Before dusk a counterattack comprising panzer grenadiers and a single Tiger tank moved in and pressed the new residents hard. Shermans went to support but were unable to position properly due to ice covering the roads – perhaps the most difficult surface for tracked vehicles to manoeuvre on.

The men of No.1 Platoon, 'A' Company, 13th Parachute Battalion in 1945 AIRBORNE ASSAULT MUSEUM

Against a backdrop of burning buildings on the outskirts, the Germans attempted attack after attack in the black of night. The British occupied buildings to create makeshift strongpoints, while patrols were sent out with orders to act aggressively. Hand-to-hand fighting was encouraged so that their positions remained concealed, and their ammunition preserved. The infantry were held each time, but the fighting was increasingly desperate – 'A' Company called down artillery on its own positions in a frantic effort to prevent it from being overrun.

However, there was a 55-tonne problem. The Tiger reached the centre of the village and was squatting with a commanding view of the main street. Its machine guns dominated the approaches to it, preventing the British from fully securing Bure.

The next morning, PIAT-armed paras attempted to knock out the tank. The PIAT, a spigot-type weapon, was somewhat cumbersome and required more skill than shoulder-fired rockets. However, it had an advantage; the PIAT produced no backblast, so could be fired from within buildings without endangering those inside.

Nevertheless, the weapon teams still had to find good positions within range of the Tiger – ideally a flank or rear shot. Major Watson took charge of the effort to "organise his PIAT teams and beat off the tanks", and even stepped out of cover just 50 yards from the tank, drawing attention in the hope it would follow and present a better shot for the waiting PIATs.

'C' Company's Lance Corporal David Robinson was sent forward with two men and a PIAT. Picking their way through the back gardens of the houses on the main street, they were to flank the Tiger – which was hull down in a dip in the road, sheltered by a church wall. They crawled about 200 yards before a machine gun opened up. Hiding behind an 18in bank, they realised that if they moved forward, the gun would get them, but if they stayed, the mortars would. Telling his men to run, Robinson shouted "GO!" and picked up the PIAT. As he did, a tracer went through both trouser legs without hitting him.

Later, he found himself waiting for a shot from near a barn, watching the slowly tank approach. However, the Tiger stopped, trained its turret at the barn, and fired. The shell went clean through, startling the cows inside and landing in a dung heap, scattering manure. The noise seemed to unnerve the tank commander, who retreated to his previous hull-down position.

From there, the paras struggled to get close, with the tank keeping aggressors at distance with its machine guns or by bringing down buildings with its 8.8cm gun. Beevor states that the shelling and automatic fire was so intense that it was impossible to cross the main street. With casualties mounting and unable to reach the wounded, orderlies on one side resorted to taping medical supplies to magazines and hurling them across through smashed windows.

The Scots' Shermans

Meanwhile, five German attacks were repulsed. They had brought up heavier guns and their artillery was taking its toll on the Shermans. Between these and German armour, several were knocked out. More reinforcements, a rifle company from the 2nd Battalion, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry, took up positions in Bure but by evening they

The Tiger I, this knocked out example providing cover to US forward observers during the Battle of the Bulge, was a formidable tank and those present at Bure had a great influence on the battle US SIGNAL CORPS ARCHIVE

A British soldier with a PIAT lies in the snow during the Battle of the Bulge. At Bure, PIAT teams attempted to knock out a lone Tiger that held up the advance CORBIS/GETTY

British paratroopers clear a building during the Battle of the Bulge AIRBORNE ASSAULT MUSEUM

A Bren team covers a patrol, presumably as it leaves Bure AIRBORNE ASSAULT MUSEUM

Montgomery converses with Major-General Bols and Brigadiers Flavell, Hill and Poett, January 1945 AIRBORNE ASSAULT MUSEUM

After the fighting around the Bulge, the 13th Battalion was soon committed to the vast airborne drop over the Rhine IWM BU2293

had been forced back as two more Tigers advanced with infantry.

As bitter as Bure was for the paratroopers, it was equally grim for the tankies of the 2nd Fife and Forfar. Like their airborne comrades, the Scots had been looking forward to a quiet Christmas. Billeted in Ypres, they had returned their Shermans ahead of conversion to the new Comet. On December 20, after a party, came new orders. Hungover or not, elements were rushed ahead to find billets and tanks.

Captain William Brownlie, 'A' Squadron HQ, remembered: "Forget the Comets, leave all heavy kit behind, pick up our old Shermans in Brussels, get to the Meuse and help stop von Rundstedt. Advance party to leave at 1330hrs. Brussels in turmoil, population very scared. We laid out areas for billets, there being no time for details, and I was sent as regimental guide to a point where our column was expected. They were late, it was cold and pouring with rain, V1s were passing overhead, very depressing."

The remainder of the regiment followed, arriving to reclaim its Shermans. Many searched for their old mounts. Trooper Ron Forbes, 'B' Squadron, was one fortunate enough to find his old tank: "We said, 'Right boys, we'll see if we can get *Annsmuir* back!' Lucky enough, when we got into the tank park, we managed to get hold of *Annsmuir*, a 17-pounder! It was snowing a lot. We got paint and painted the tanks white."

After readying their tanks, the battalion moved to Namur as a blocking force before redeploying to Falmagne. Then, ahead of the British counterattack scheduled for January 3, the yeoman moved to Resteigne, arriving amid a snowstorm that deposited a foot of snow overnight. The tankies struggled to remain on the road, their vehicles sliding all over the place.

Before the paras advanced into Bure, 'A' Squadron took the 1,000ft high Chapel Hill to provide fire support to the infantry, but as it advanced, the unit quickly lost a Sherman to a StuG beside the chapel. Once this was destroyed, they engaged a bizarre new threat, as Sergeant Roy Vallance recalled: "On the opposite slope to us, about a mile from us, we fired on some Shermans that were firing at us. They had captured them from the Americans, they had black crosses painted roughly on. It seemed very strange! I brewed one up."

> ***"We fired on some Shermans that were firing at us. They had captured them from the Americans, they had black crosses painted roughly on. It seemed very strange!"***
>
> SERGEANT ROY VALLANCE,
> 2ND FIFE AND FORFAR YEOMANRY

Two more German tanks were knocked out before Chapel Hill was cleared. 'A' Squadron then sent shell after shell into Bure. As a troop of Shermans slowly rolled into the village, a StuG waited for them to pass and ambushed them from the rear, knocking out two.

One crew was fortunate to avoid battle that day, through no fault of its own. After the cold morning on January 2, 'A' Squadron's Lieutenant Thomas Heald found his vehicle unserviceable: "It wouldn't start. The starter motor had packed up. One would have thought a starter motor was a simple thing, but the way we had collected the tank, we hadn't got proper spares, and they had no starter motor. My tank was out of action for the next day. Which, as it turned out, was a bit of luck because I would have been the leading troop the next day, and we had four tanks out of 12 in the squadron knocked out. They split up the other two tanks into the other troops. I was furious that there was no other tank for me!"

As the fighting raged, 'C' Squadron moved into Bure. Blizzards reduced visibility to almost zero and two more Shermans were lost. At night, it was decided that one troop would stay with the paratroopers while the rest withdrew to laager and replenish – while the Germans shelled the tanks and their supporting lorries, laden with fuel and other necessaries. Ice continued to be a problem, with the armour "slithering" rather than driving.

By the morning of January 4, the Germans had knocked out the three Shermans left in Bure. A reinforcing troop was sent, but this immediately lost a Sherman. The shelling was heavy, and it was deemed too risky to detach a troop to remain in the village overnight.

Bayonets and grenades

Meanwhile, 'A' Squadron remained on Chapel Hill. The supporting fire of its tanks was vital to the defence of Bure, but it was extremely cold, and the crews were exposed. They were also firing off plenty of ammunition, but it was impossible to drive ammunition lorries up to the tanks, so the supplies had to be dragged up the 1,000ft rise by hand.

Major-General Bols, the new commander of the 6th Airborne, received the DSO for his efforts during the Ardennes offensive. He is shown here receiving the Bar to that award from Monty in May 1945 IWM BU4745

BRAVERY AT BURE

Bure was also a scene of tremendous gallantry. Major Jack Watson received the Military Cross for his leadership and his citation concludes: "although the enemy counterattacked time and again, Watson coolly organised the defence, and having repelled the attacks, advanced and eventually completed the clearing of that part of the village allotted to him. His conduct, energy, and gallantry were beyond praise and without him the attack might well have failed."

The MC was also awarded to Captain the Reverend Whitfield Foy, and the Military Medal to Sergeant Robert Scott of the 225th Parachute Field Ambulance. With stretcher-bearers doing their courageous best but unable to move, Scott and the padre drove an ambulance into Bure and parked up in view of a Tiger. The tank rumbled right up to their vehicle, halting within inches of it and with its guns trained upon it. The tank's commander climbed out and agreed that Scott and Foy could collect the wounded on the proviso that they did not return.

Captain David Tibbs MC of the Royal Army Medical Corps later wrote: "[Our] tank commanders were courageous and resourceful with active groups of panzer grenadiers clearly experienced in street fighting. Our men proved equal to this but there were many casualties. At one stage there were five badly wounded men in the cellar about 30 yards in front of the [Tiger] tank. We knew of this but saw no way of getting them out. At this stage Sergeant Scott came to me and asked if he could take an ambulance up to the house and remove the wounded men, and the Padre said he would like to go along as well. If I had known precisely what was planned, I might have stopped such lunacy.

"The ambulance, heavily laden, lumbered back down the main street, past my aid post and back to the depot two miles away. Two men were the heroes of the hour – Sergeant Scott (with Padre Foy in strong support) and of course, the German tank commander... What men! It is said that later (but it may simply be legend) when the tank commander showed himself through the hatch to direct his men once too often, and was shot, some of our men shed tears at this. Such is war and the strange bonding it can create between the men of both sides."

'A' Company signaller Dennis Boardman said: "We saw an ambulance coming up the road. We stopped it outside the front door; it was Scott, and with him was Foy, a man loved and respected throughout the unit. Scott was one of the bravest men I ever met."

The officers of the 13th Parachute Battalion, Major Watson sits far right, Captain The Reverent Foy sits far left AIRBORNE ASSAULT MUSEUM

January 5 brought a change of tactics. Fixing bayonets and carrying as many grenades as they could, the paratroopers went house-to-house dislodging infiltrating Germans. Bure was a fairly large village and included some substantial structures; many buildings had cellars, and its residents had not been given the opportunity to leave. The British discovered sick or wounded civilians, some driven to madness by the fighting feet just above their heads.

Meanwhile, the Panzer-Lehr was making its final effort to recapture Bure. Four Tigers supported multiple attempts to break through. However, the clearance of the village combined with a large attack pushed the Germans away. Just the lone, stubborn Tiger remained, finally destroyed by 'A' Company that night.

After three days of urban fighting of a ferocity rarely seen elsewhere, Bure was in Allied hands. The news then arrived that Grupont, the original objective, had been taken with little resistance. Within the hour, Poett ordered the 5th Parachute Battalion and the 23rd Hussars in to take the place of the 13th Battalion and the Fife and Forfars.

The 13th Parachute Battalion lost seven officers and 182 men – including 68 killed – at Bure, roughly a third of its strength. The Fife and Forfar Yeomanry lost 16 Shermans, while the 2nd Ox and Bucks had seven killed and 14 wounded. The 21st Army Group's overall casualties for the entire Battle of the Bulge numbered about 1,400, including 200 killed – revealing just how bloody the action at Bure really was. In terms of numbers committed and losses, the Battle of the Bulge is an 'American battle'. However, in its initial stabilising effort and contributions to the counterattack, the 21st Army Group had a vital part in rolling back the Germans.

By February, the 6th Airborne Division was withdrawn but in March it and the component 13th Parachute Battalion were participating in Operation Varsity, the largest single-day airborne operation conducted and that eased the progress of the main crossing of the Rhine. The scale of such operations means that the effort of the 13th Parachute Battalion at Bure has been eclipsed. It is, however, not forgotten by the villagers, and a memorial dedicated to the unit stands in its centre, where, 80 years ago, it was gripped by a vicious brawl in a long, cold winter.

The author thanks the historian Peter Hart for permission to quote from his book on the 2nd Fife and Forfar Yeomanry: Burning Steel: A Tank Regiment at War, 1939-45.

City of Norwich Aviation Museum

Craig Moore profiles the City of Norwich Aviation Museum, a fascinating collection dedicated to Norfolk's flying heritage

City of Norwich
AVIATION MUSEUM
RAF 100 GROUP MEMORIAL MUSEUM

The main entrance of the City of Norwich Aviation Museum
ALL IMAGES COURTESY OF CRAIG MOORE

Nestled on the outskirts of Norwich is a facility containing a diverse and unique collection of aircraft and associated artefacts – the City of Norwich Aviation Museum.

On entry, visitors will notice how the history of each of Norfolk's 20 World War Two airfields has been meticulously researched and portrayed through a variety of information boards, newspaper cuttings, photographs and memorabilia. If you like model aircraft, you are in for a treat as they are used as learning tools throughout the museum. For example, beneath each information board, a glass cabinet contains a diorama featuring wonderfully painted scale models of all the aircraft types that once flew from airfields within the county.

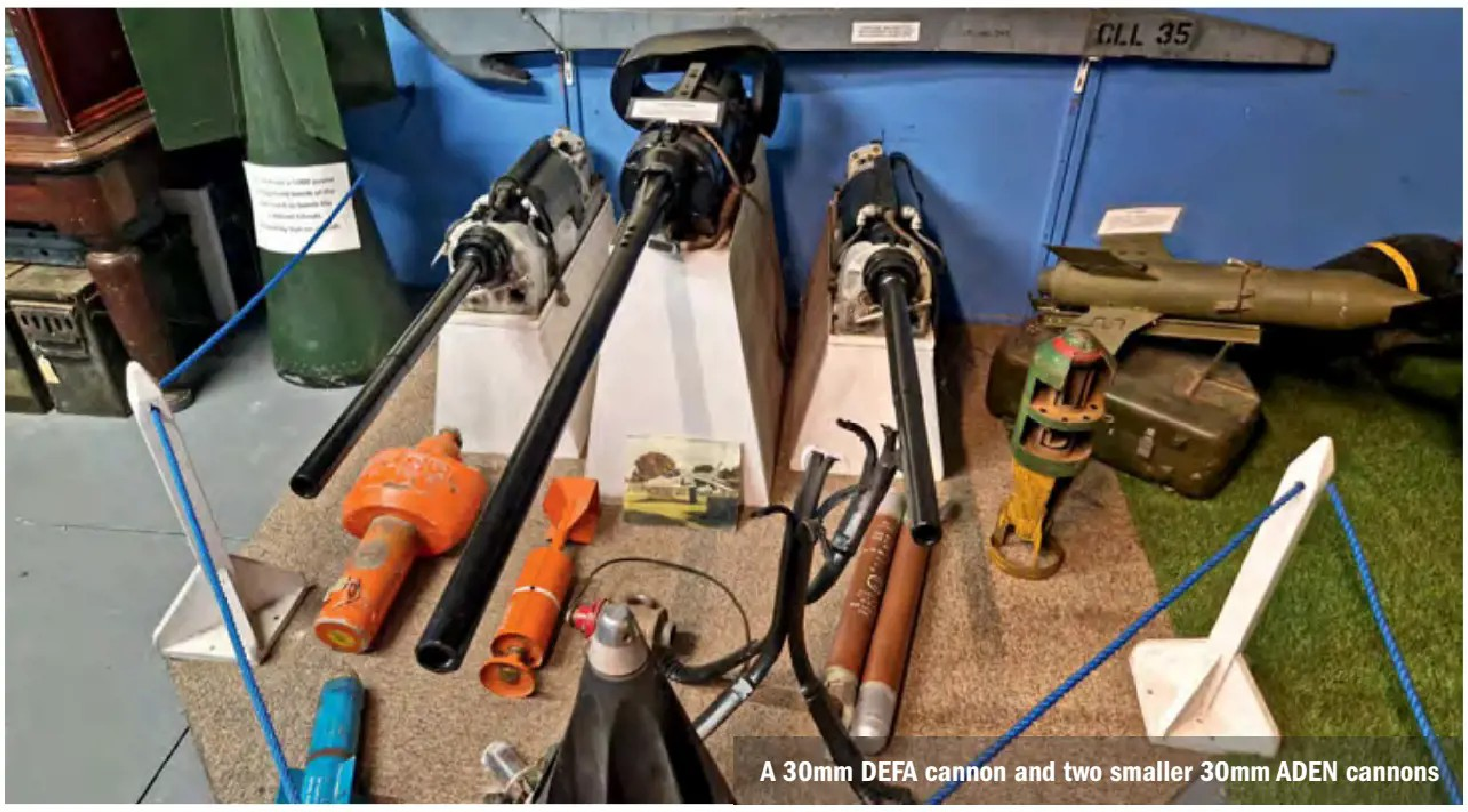
Throughout the site, special attention has been paid to displaying aircraft engines. These range from the Rolls-Royce Bristol Siddeley Pegasus used in vertical or short take-off and landing (VSTOL) aircraft like the Harrier, a Rolls-Royce Adour turbofan from a Jaguar, a Rolls-Royce TAY RB.620-15 medium bypass turbofan and even a German Daimler-Benz DB-601 engine from a Messerschmitt Bf 110, recovered from the North Sea.

My uncle Sidney was a 'tail end Charlie' – rear gunner – in Wellingtons during World War Two, so I was particularly pleased to see a large section of the museum dedicated to explaining life as

Model aircraft feature heavily in the museum's displays

Displays dedicated to the history of Norfolk's wartime airfields

A Rolls-Royce TAY RB.620-15 medium bypass turbofan jet engine



A 30mm DEFA cannon and two smaller 30mm ADEN cannons

an RAF air gunner. Exemplifying this, a large 1:1 scale mock-up of a rear fuselage had been built by museum volunteers Mike Church and Dave Thatcher, to display better a Frazer Nash FN-50 dorsal turret and a Frazer Nash FN-20 rear turret. They first built the wooden frame and placed a curved skin on the airframe. The interior has been meticulously designed to replicate the rear section of a British bomber – there's even a radio/navigator's position!

Visitors can also find a display of Cold War aircraft machine guns. Museum staff have arranged, side by side, a 30mm DEFA cannon and two smaller 30mm ADEN cannons. The ADEN entered service with the Hawker Hunter in 1954 and was used on every British armed aircraft until the advent of the Panavia Tornado. The French-made 30mm DEFA (Direction des Études et Fabrications d'Armement) cannon was similar to the ADEN, having been fitted to many French aircraft and the Anglo-French SEPECAT Jaguar.

Next, visitors will find a room dedicated to aircraft photo-reconnaissance. Guests can see a selection of aircraft-mounted cameras on display, including an infrared line scan camera module once fitted to a reconnaissance pod. Mounted on the wall beside it is a selection of operational reconnaissance photographs. Pride of place here is a blue lightroom desk that displays multiple reels of negative and positive images for analysis.

Further along, an exhibit details the unusual history of Norwich City Airport. The current site was formerly RAF Horsham St Faith, which opened on June 1, 1940. For a time, the airfield was home to No.114 and No.139 Squadrons, No.2 Group, Bomber Command, which operated Blenheim Mk.IVs.

In September 1942, the airfield's ownership was transferred to the USAAF, before being passed to RAF Fighter Command on July 10, 1945. The site subsequently became the home of four Gloster Meteor jet fighter squadrons, one of which was No.307 Squadron, entirely composed of Polish personnel.

The airfield was sold as a joint ownership partnership to Norwich City Council and Norfolk County Council, which developed the modern-day civilian Norwich International Airport. Charter flights began in 1971 with Air Anglia, with the main terminal building opening in 1988.

After this, visitors can walk outside where they can see 30 different aircraft and accompanying information boards. The museum's Hawker Hunter F51 was a former Royal Danish Air Force aircraft and has been painted to represent a 74(F) Squadron Hunter F.4 – a type

CURATOR'S FAVOURITE

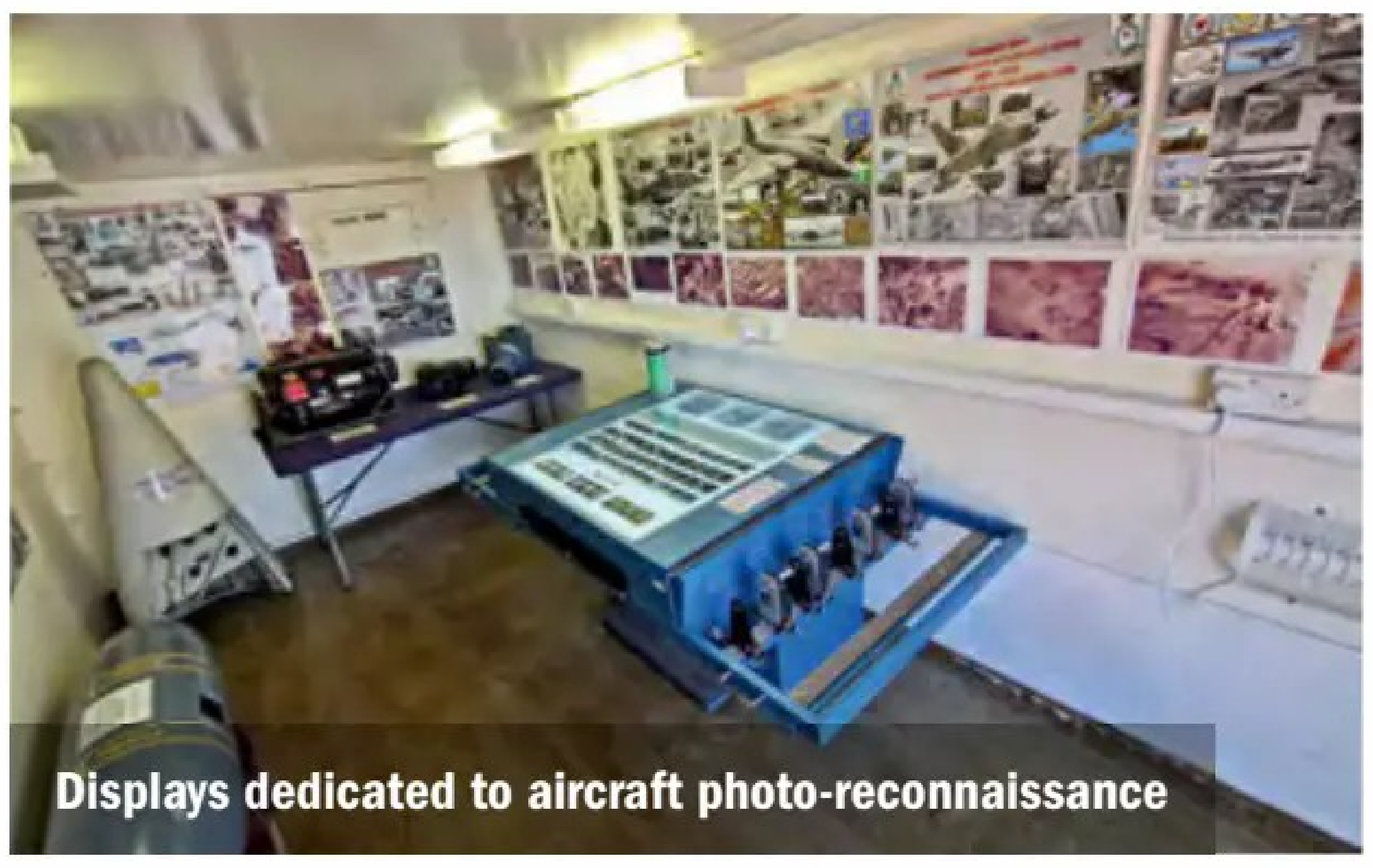
City of Norwich Aviation Museum curator Steven Day said the Avro Vulcan B.Mk.2 was his favourite artefact. "In 1983, after it retired from service, an RAF crew flew it into Norwich International Airport. In 1985, a hole had to be made in the airport security fence so it could be moved to the new permanent site on the other side of the perimeter road. It's particularly eye-catching and always draws in visitors."

The museum's Avro Vulcan B2

once based at RAF Horsham St Faith. Beside it, there is a second Hunter, FR10, built as an F6A that first served with the 19(F) Squadron before moving to 229 Operational Conversion Unit. It ended its flying career with 1 Tactical Weapons Unit, before completing its service as an instructional airframe at RAF Scampton. It is painted in the markings of 229 OCU, 79 Squadron.

The museum's SEPECAT Jaguar GR1 first flew on November 16, 1972, and spent its life as a trial aircraft for weapons carriage and stress monitoring. It took part in high-profile motorway take-off and landing trials on the M55 near Preston in April 1979. It wears the markings of 54(F) Squadron, which flew from RAF Coltishall from 1974 to 2002.

Nearby is a Gloster Meteor, painted in the colours of 245 Squadron. The museum acquired the aircraft from RAF Neatishead, where it had been a gate guardian. Beside it stands an English Electric Lightning F53, built for the Royal Saudi Air Force This was the export variant of the RAF's F6 with ground attack capability. It was used by No 2, No 6 and No 13 Squadrons, Royal Saudi Air Force.


Displays dedicated to aircraft photo-reconnaissance

A Gloster Meteor cockpit

This English Electric Lightning was used by 2, 6 and 13 Squadrons of the Royal Saudi Air Force

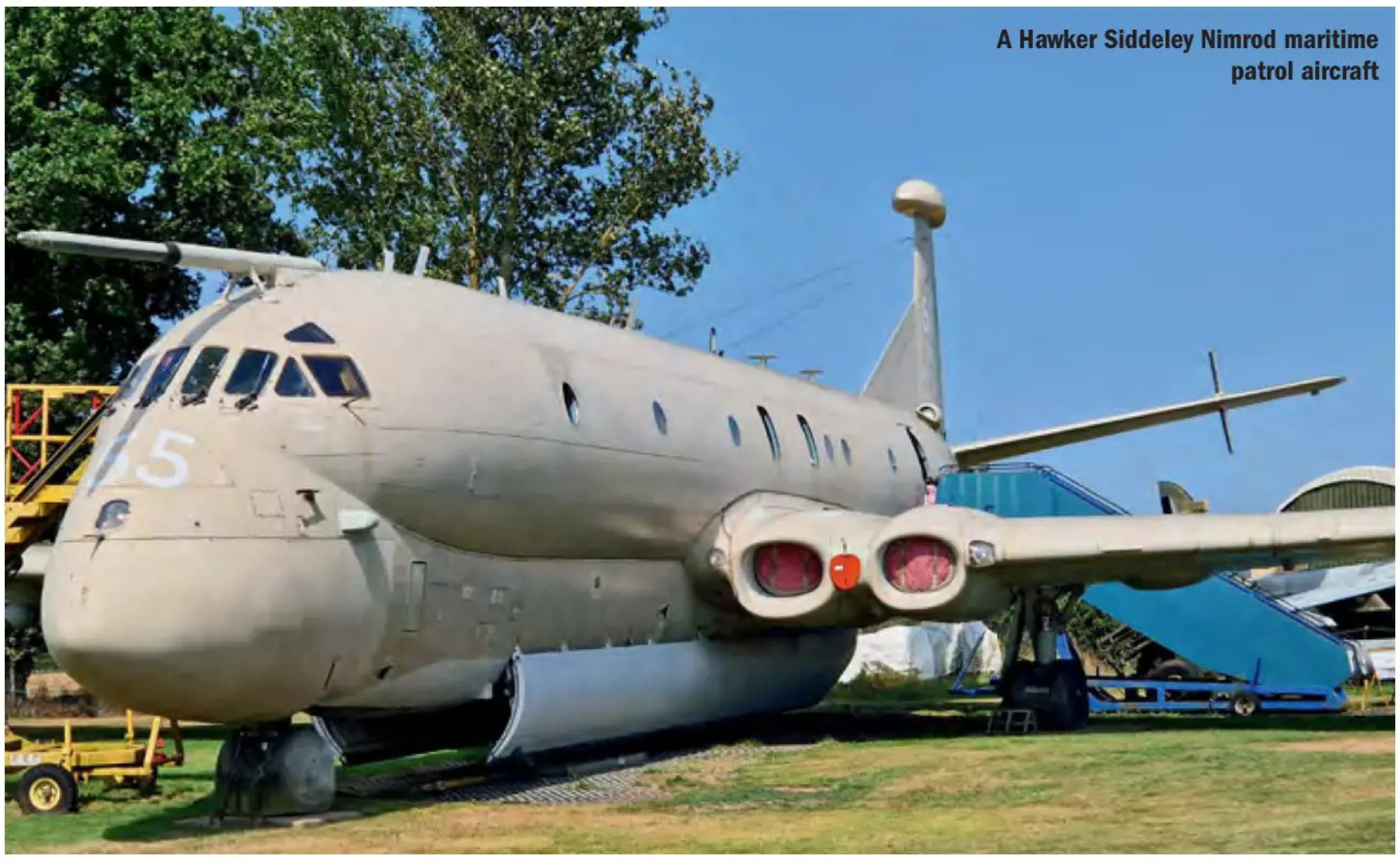
The museum's magnificent Avro Vulcan B2, arguably the main draw of the site, entered service in March 1964 with IX(B) Squadron, as part of the RAF Coningsby/RAF Cottesmore Wing. It briefly served with A&AEE in 1968 before settling in at RAF Waddington with 44 Squadron and 101 Squadron. In 1982, it was deployed to Ascension Island as part of Operation Corporate effort, from where it conducted 'Black Buck' missions.

The museum's Harrier was built as a T2 by Hawker Siddeley. It had its first flight on November 5, 1970, and was delivered to the Harrier Conversion Unit at RAF Wittering in January 1971. In May that year, it was modified to T4 standard and delivered back to RAF Wittering, before joining 1 Squadron. In July 1979, the aircraft was upgraded to T4A standard and fitted with a Pegasus 103 engine. In 1990, it was modified to T4N and transferred to the Fleet Air Arm. It was taken on strength by the 899 Naval Air Squadron at RNAS Yeovilton, where it received its dark sea grey scheme. On June 27, 1994, its service life ended when it was involved in a heavy landing accident, causing unrepairable damage.

This Harrier T2 had its first flight on November 5, 1970 and was delivered to the Harrier conversion unit at RAF Wittering in January 1971

The museum's SEPECAT Jaguar GR1 first flew on November 16, 1972 and spent its life as a trial aircraft

Overall, a fantastic collection of static aircraft and artefacts, and a large variety of exhibits and displays all make the City of Norwich Aviation Museum a place you must visit. BW


A Hawker Siddeley Nimrod maritime patrol aircraft

VISITOR INFORMATION

The City of Norwich Aviation Museum is open Tuesday-Sunday. Opening hours vary depending on the season. See the website for more information.

Admission: Adult £9, Concession £7, Child (8-16) £5, Youth (Under 8) Free, Family (2 Adults, 3 Children) £25
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Mau monitor

The forerunner of the Royal New Zealand Air Force completed its debut combat operation when it flew against fugitive rebels in the remote South Pacific.

Words: **Andrew Thomas**

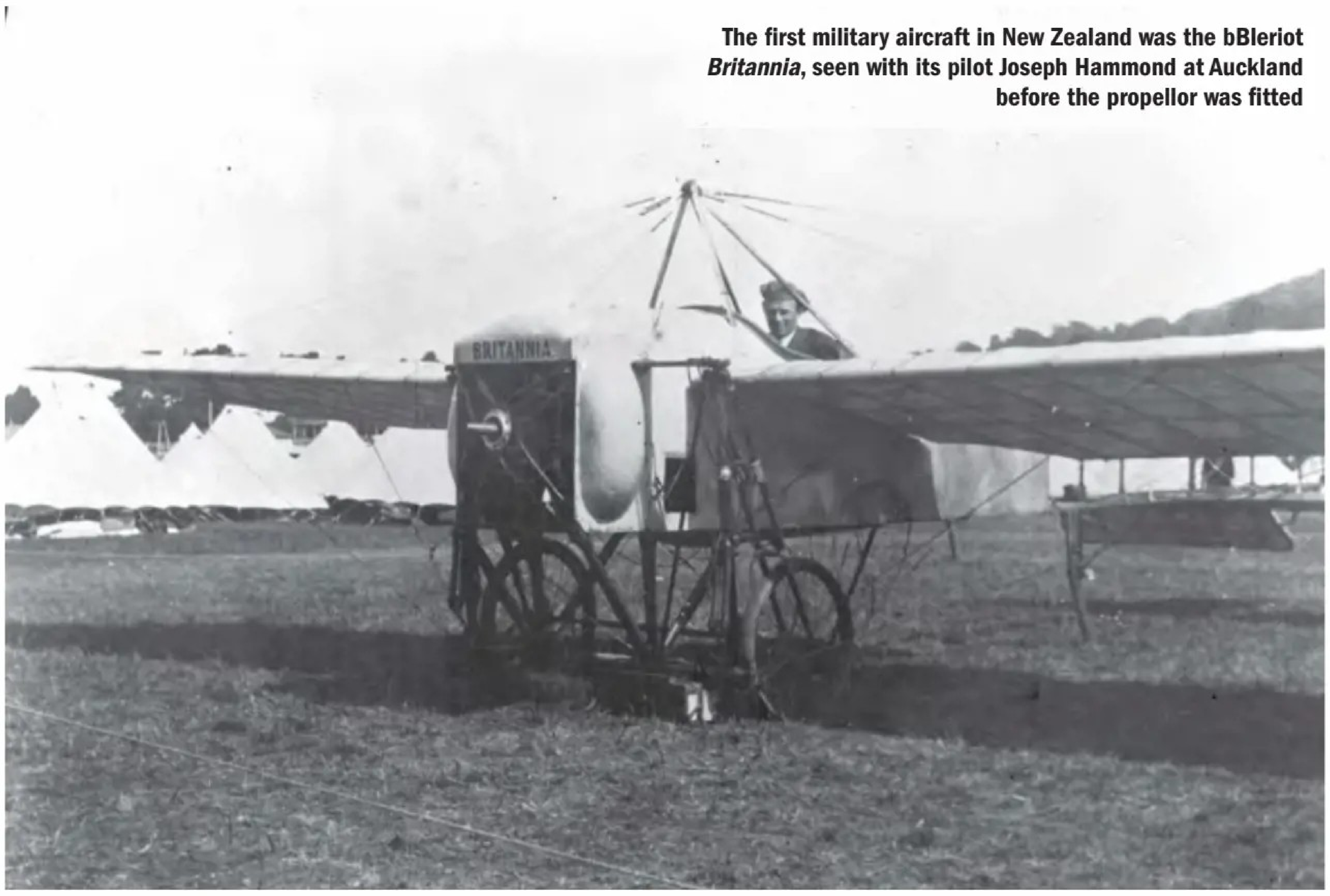
In 1913, the New Zealand Army was gifted a two-seat Blériot monoplane by the British, thus heralding the start of military aviation in the Dominion. The aircraft, named *Britannia,* arrived in Wellington on the SS *Athenic* on September 29 and was taken to Auckland where it was assembled. However, its arrival presented something of a problem – there were no military pilots in New Zealand.

Nevertheless, *Britannia* made its first demonstration flight in the hands of Joseph Hammond at Epsom showground on January 17, 1914. Several more flights were made until January 28, when Hammond made an unauthorised flight carrying a female actress, after which he was grounded. The Blériot was placed into storage, and following the outbreak of World War One, was returned to Britain for use by the Royal Flying Corps (RFC).

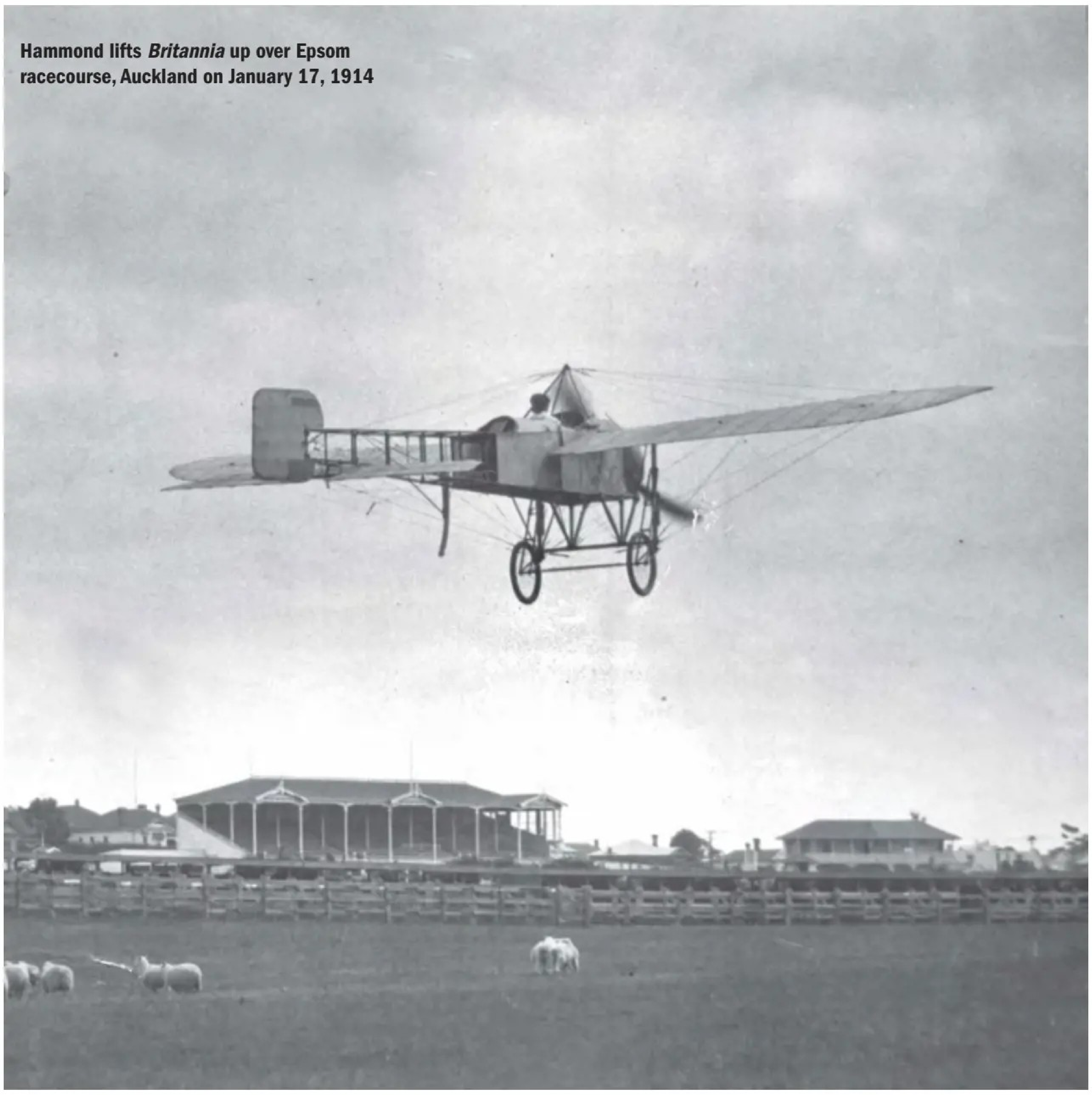
As starts go, it had been inauspicious. However, during the war, many New Zealanders flew with the RFC, the Royal Naval Air Service and Australian Flying Corps, seeing service in all theatres. The

Armed sailors from HMS *Dunedin* provided guard to the NZPAF DH.60G Moth when it was ashore in Samoa
ALL IMAGES VIA AFMNZ UNLESS NOTED OTHERWISE

first New Zealand airman killed in action was Lieutenant William Burn, who died flying with the Australian Half Flight in Mesopotamia on July 30, 1915. In France, several New Zealanders became proficient pilots with no fewer than 15 becoming aces, the most successful being Major Keith 'Grid' Caldwell, who was credited with 25 victories.



The first military aircraft in New Zealand was the bBleriot *Britannia*, seen with its pilot Joseph Hammond at Auckland before the propellor was fitted


Hammond lifts *Britannia* up over Epsom racecourse, Auckland on January 17, 1914

Early days

Back in New Zealand, the government assisted in the creation of two private schools to train pilots – the New Zealand Flying School at Kohimarama, near Auckland, and the Canterbury Aviation Company at Sockburn, near Christchurch. By 1918, 110 pilots had been trained and 68 of them served with the RFC or RAF. There was also a Kiwi connection to the first award of the VC to an airman – though born in London, Second Lieutenant William Rhodes-Moorhouse's grandfather was an early settler to New Zealand, and his grandmother was of Māori heritage.

At the end of the war, many New Zealand pilots remained in Britain to serve with the newly created RAF though others returned home. From May 1919 the British offered the Dominions of Australia, Canada, India, New Zealand and South Africa up to 100 surplus aircraft each under the Imperial Gift scheme to enable them to form their own air services. New Zealand accepted 33 aircraft; 20 Avro 504K trainers, two Bristol F.2B Fighters, two de Havilland DH.4 and nine DH.9 bombers. However, just six were retained for military use and the remainder were placed in storage or lent to the nation's flying schools.

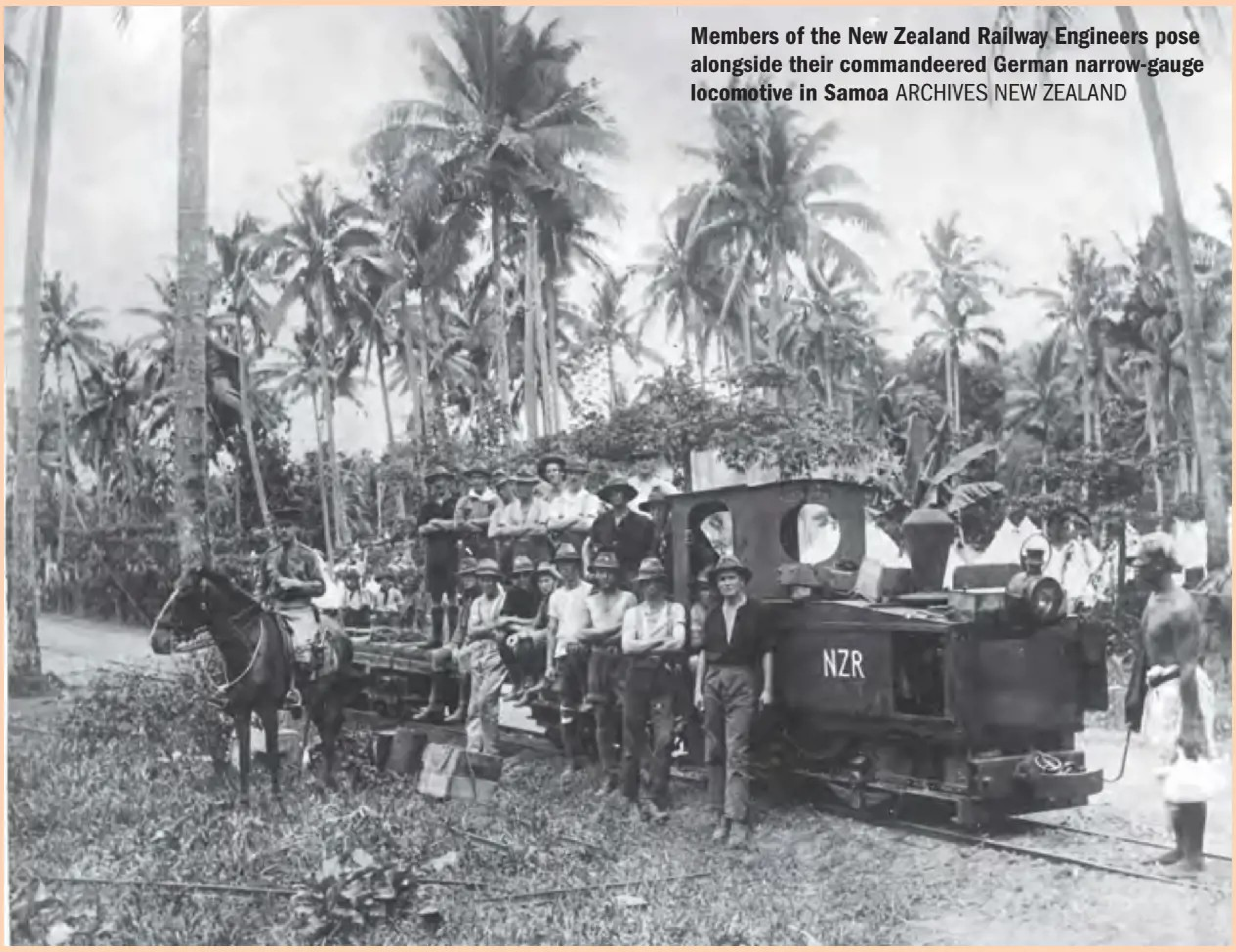
Eventually, on June 14, 1923, the New Zealand Permanent Air Force was formed

THE SAMOA EXPEDITIONARY FORCE

The Samoa Expeditionary Force was raised to seize the German wireless station in Samoa. The British requested that it and other radio facilities in the region be destroyed as a "great and urgent Imperial service" the day after World War One broke out, for fear the stations were being used by Vizeadmiral Maximilian von Spee's powerful East Asia Squadron.

Colonel Robert Logan, New Zealand Staff Corps and CO Auckland Military District, was appointed to lead the force. It comprised some 1,400 men, including: one company of the 3rd (Auckland) Regiment, two from the 5th (Wellington) Regiment, 'D' Battery, New Zealand Artillery, two sections of No.4 Company, NZ Engineers, a company of the NZ Railway Engineers and medical and signals detachments. It left New Zealand in a heavily escorted convoy on August 15, travelling via New Caledonia – where the escort was reinforced by the battlecruiser HMAS *Australia* – and Fiji, embarking Legion of Frontiersmen (British/Commonwealth paramilitaries) and Samoan chiefs and guides.

The force arrived at Apia on August 29 and landed unopposed. Its occupation was rapid, with government offices and the wireless station quickly secured. It remained in Samoa until March 1915, after which it was relieved. A similar force, the Australian Naval and Military Expeditionary Force, met the same objectives in German New Guinea.



Members of the New Zealand Railway Engineers pose alongside their commandeered German narrow-gauge locomotive in Samoa ARCHIVES NEW ZEALAND

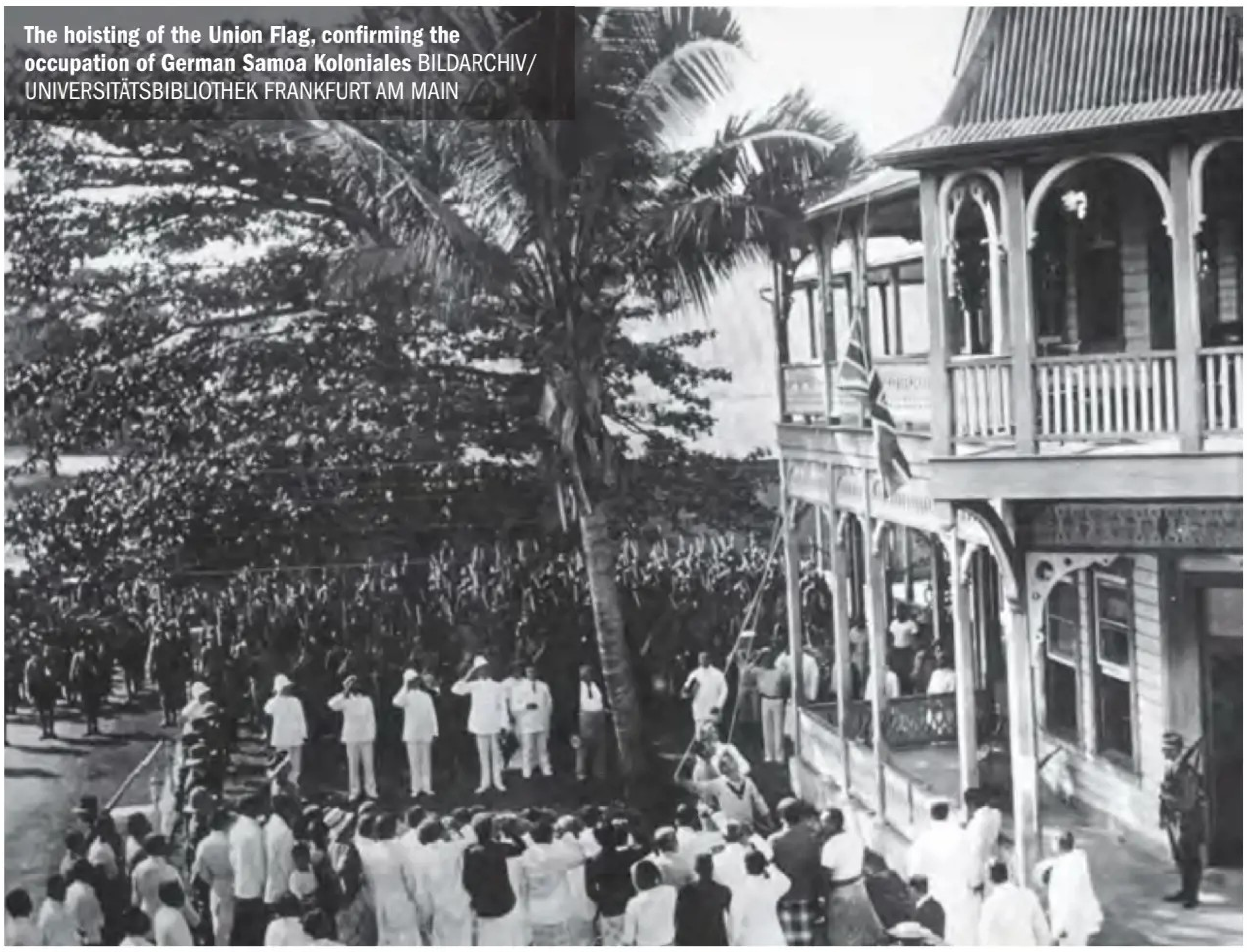
as a part of the army, though initially its permanent staff comprised just four officers and two airmen with 15 aircraft (seven 504Ks, four DH.9s, two DH.4s and two F.2Bs). However, a reserve force, titled the New Zealand Air Force and with a strength of 72 veteran officers, was also created. Initially these airmen flew the surviving Imperial Gift aircraft from Sockburn and a new airfield at Hobsonville, near Auckland, which had been developed in 1925. Sockburn was later renamed Wigram in honour of Sir Henry Wigram, whose generous donation enabled new aircraft to be purchased. These included three Gloster Grebe single-seat fighters, new production F.2Bs and seven Gypsy-engined DH.60G Moth trainers. Among the latter was '995', which arrived in New Zealand in July 1929 and on November 17 became the first aircraft to fly non-stop between Wellington and Hobsonville – about 320 miles as the crow flies.

Flag and flu

Another new arrival was 31-year-old Captain Sidney Wallingford, who had returned to his native country in June having concluded a short service commission in the RAF. His initial duties were as the adjutant at Hobsonville. In December he became a flight lieutenant when the NZPAF and NZAF adopted RAF ranks.

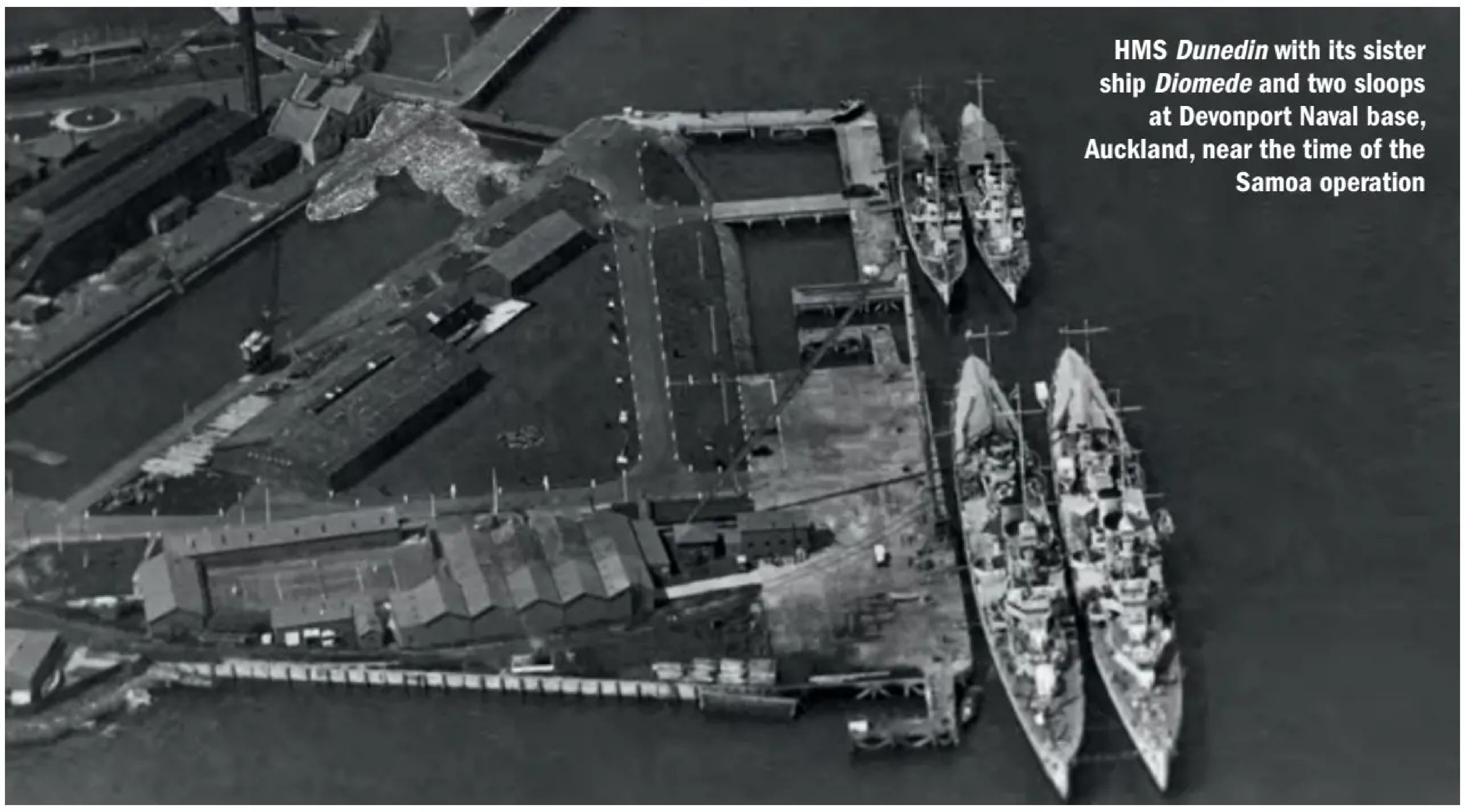
Back in August 1914, Deutsch-Samoa, an Imperial German possession later known as Western Samoa and then Samoa, had been occupied by New Zealand. The Samoa Expeditionary Force arrived to destroy the German wireless station there, and the force's commander, Colonel Robert Logan – as the new military administrator – saw the Union Flag hoisted on August 30.

Post war, Samoa was administered by New Zealand as a League of Nations Mandate. The territory comprised two main islands, Savai'i and Upolu, with Apia, the capital and largest settlement, on the latter's north coast. Apia was some 1,800 miles northeast of Auckland, and the Samoans resented New Zealand's rule, primarily due to the mishandling of the catastrophic 1918 flu pandemic. The so-called Spanish Flu killed some 22% of the native population in short order, as the Samoans had rarely encountered European diseases. Through the 1920s there was increasing resistance



The hoisting of the Union Flag, confirming the occupation of German Samoa Koloniales BILDARCHIV/UNIVERSITÄTSBIBLIOTHEK FRANKFURT AM MAIN

Flt Lt Sidney Wallingford was the pilot who commanded the NZPAF operation to Samoa



HMS *Dunedin* with its sister ship *Diomede* and two sloops at Devonport Naval base, Auckland, near the time of the Samoa operation

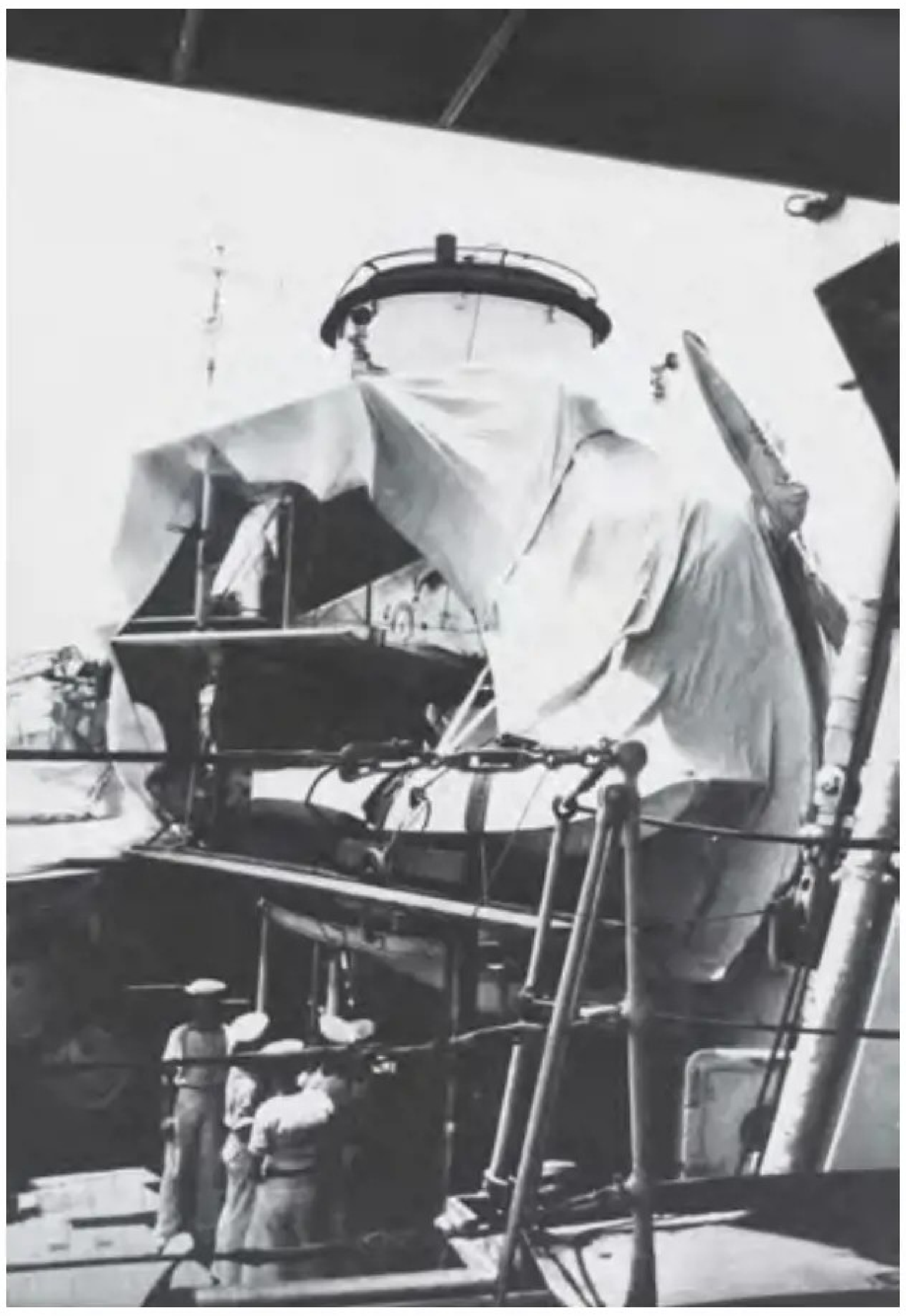
by the pro-independence Mau movement, which gathered widespread support and instituted a campaign of non-violent non-co-operation with the authorities. However, this was to lead to tragedy. On December 28, 1929, the Mau held a large demonstration in Apia where the police attempted to arrest one of its leaders, Tupua Tamasese Lealofi III. A struggle developed between the police and the Mau and when a dispersal order was ignored, the situation soured. During the struggles, New Zealand police officers opened fire to disperse the demonstrators. Lealofi and ten others were killed and approximately 50 people were injured; one policeman was also clubbed to death. The day became known in Samoa as 'Black Saturday'.

The civil authorities in Samoa requested help from New Zealand to restore order and on January 13, 1930, the Mau organisation was banned, leading to as many as 1,500 Mau men taking to the bush. Meanwhile, in New Zealand, preparations were made to send additional forces. At Auckland's Devonport dockyard, the flagship of the New Zealand Division of the Royal Navy, the cruiser HMS *Dunedin*, commanded by Captain Geoffrey Blake, embarked 150 Royal Marines and 50 military police as well as stores and provisions for the expedition to Samoa.

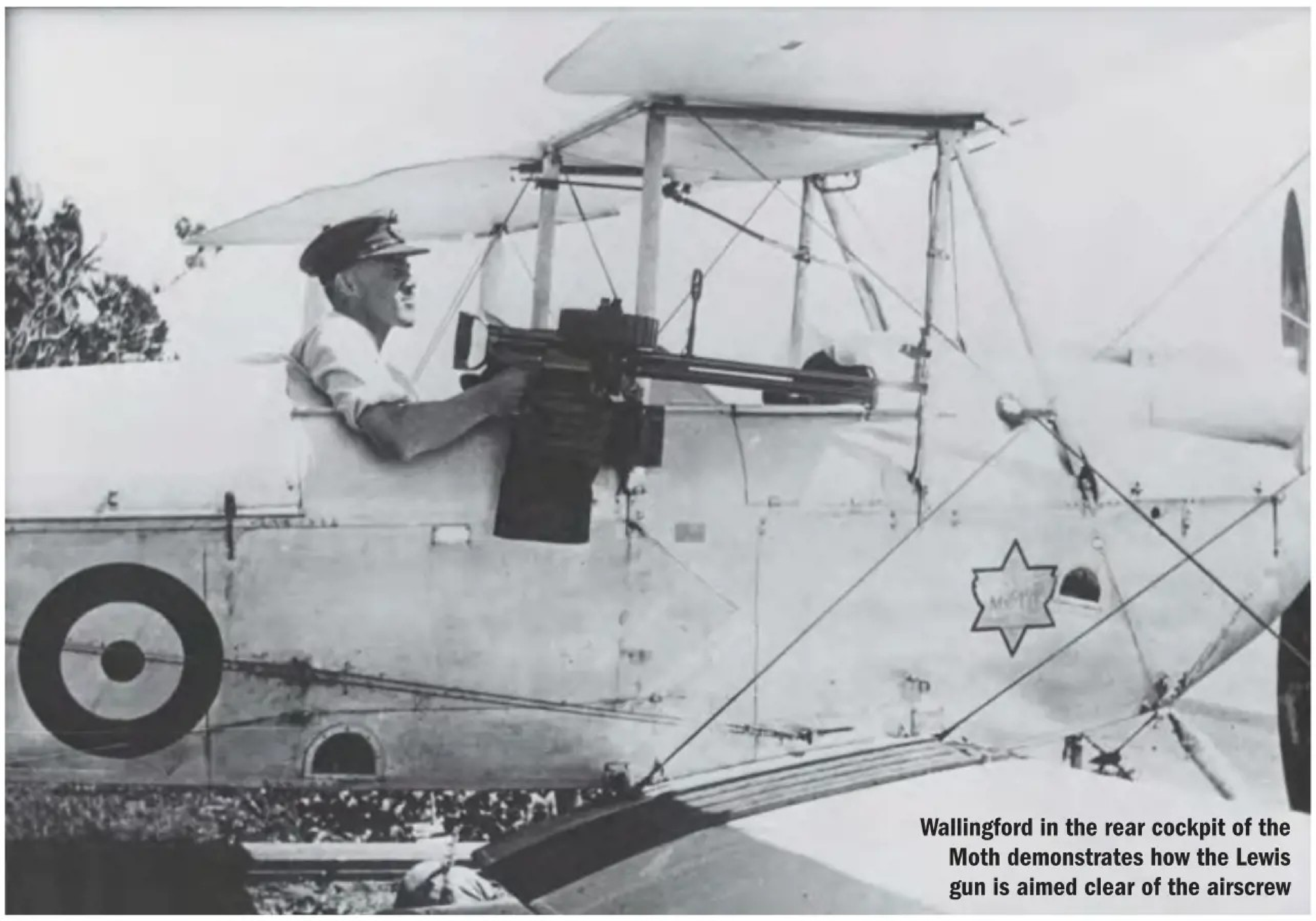
In addition, Moth 995 was fitted with floats and embarked in the light cruiser, which sailed to Samoa to assist in the search for Mau supporters. This was the first aircraft dispatched from New Zealand on 'warlike' operations, and this first NZPAF deployment was commanded by (now Flight Lieutenant) Sidney Wallingford, who was accompanied by two groundcrew corporals to maintain the aircraft.

Dunedin arrived at Apia on January 12 and disembarked the marines and police to pursue the Mau, though the lightly equipped rebels easily slipped through the bush. The Mau lived in simple camps, constantly moving ahead of the cumbersome security forces with no intention to fight. Armed sailors were also deployed from the ship to bolster security in the capital and guard vulnerable points. However, the 'ace' up the sleeve was the presence of the NZPAF Moth.

The aircraft was hoisted by crane into the water and towed to a beach where a temporary wooden slipway enabled it to be pulled out of the sea on a wheeled dolly. The wings were refitted, and engine tests conducted though this took some time as the humidity and heavy tropical downpours caused malfunctions. Wallingford undertook the first operational flight to find and identify the rebels on January 16, generally flying two patrols a day to look for Mau around Upolu. The aircraft was fitted with a wireless set for sending messages in Morse back to *Dunedin*, and to alert ground patrols Wallingford carried a Very flare pistol.



Moth 995, with floats, covered with tarpaulins on the deck of Dunedin on the way to Samoa



Wallingford in the rear cockpit of the Moth demonstrates how the Lewis gun is aimed clear of the airscrew

MORE MAGAZINES
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The Moth floatplane is serviced on the beach in preparation for another sortie over Samoa

Because the deployment was considered active service, the Moth had fittings for a Lewis gun mounted on each side of the cockpit to point outside the airscrew disc. To fire, the aircraft was flown with one hand and the gun aimed with the other. To further support the marines and police, on a number of sorties Wallingford dropped propaganda leaflets calling for the Mau to surrender. Other sorties included aerial photography and the carrying of senior marines and policemen to reconnoitre operational areas.

General reconnaissance and message dropping were the main tasks for Wallingford and the aircraft, but on one flight over a village, a hostile resident began hurling stones at the slow and low-flying Moth. Wallingford replied with his Very pistol, setting fire to a nearby hut.

Patrols by the marines continued to push into the rugged Upolu interior but, encumbered with weapons and equipment, the men suffered in the tropical conditions and tough terrain, which enabled the Mau to keep avoiding contact. However, in late January, policemen and sailors raided Fasitoóuta village, a dozen miles along the coast west of Apia, during which a young man was shot. He died in hospital a few days later and after some bitter discussion, a group of wanted Mau surrendered and almost 400 were taken into custody.

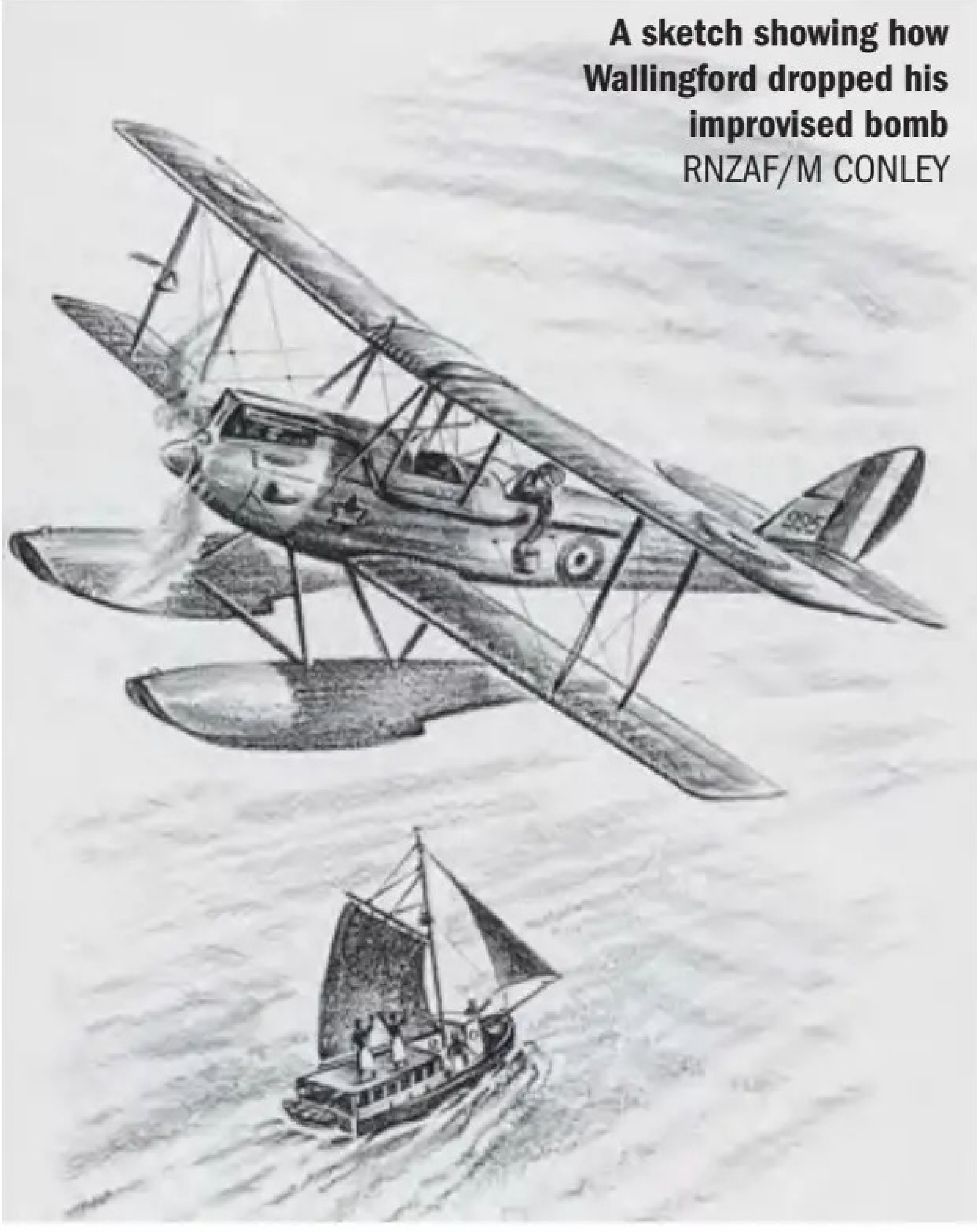
With its wings secured against strong winds, the Moth sits under guard near Apia

The tin terror

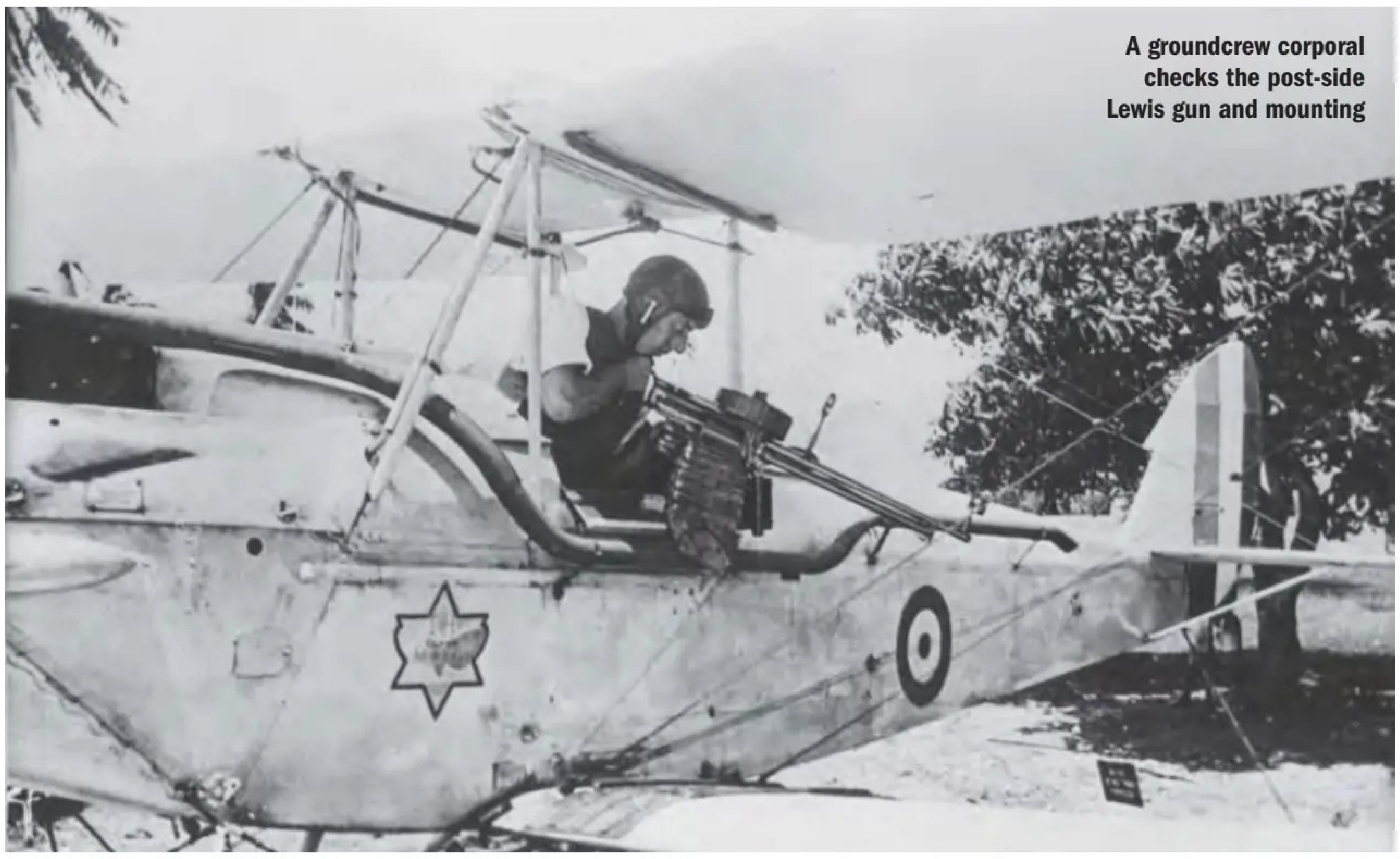
There were suspicions that small boats were carrying weapons and supplies for the Mau and on occasion these were engaged by Wallingford using his Lewis gun. However, he realised that the rounds were having little effect on what he believed were rebel boats and discussed the problem with *Dunedin's* torpedo officer. He devised an improvised bomb, putting 2lb of gun cotton in a treacle tin with the cork from a whisky bottle separating the striker from the percussion cap. Wallingford carried the 'tin terror' on his patrols, and when he spotted a suspect vessel, he dropped down, pulled out the cork and sent the device over the side. Fortunately for him, the rudimentary bomb failed to explode. A formal letter of complaint later revealed the boat was carrying a local missionary!

While New Zealand's first bombing raid had been something of a flop, overall, its aerial presence proved useful. In two months, Wallingford flew 90 hours supporting security forces in what was the first (and only) NZPAF operational deployment. On March 2, the aircraft was prepared for re-embarking and on the 12th, as a gesture to the Samoans, HMS *Dunedin* set sail for New Zealand. Through the mediation of local Europeans and missionaries, Mau leaders met New Zealand's Minister of Defence and agreed to disperse with a truce declared the same day.

On April 1, 1936, the NZPAF became fully independent as the Royal New Zealand Air Force, and from 1939 flew with great distinction throughout World War Two in Europe, Malaya and the South Pacific. Sadly, the aircraft that completed its first operational sorties had an unceremonious end. When being lifted onto *Dunedin,* the Moth was dropped and wrecked, with only the engine and floats salvaged. The floats, however, were reused on Francis Chichester's Moth ZK-AKK for his pioneering solo trans-Tasman flight.



A sketch showing how Wallingford dropped his improvised bomb
RNZAF/M CONLEY



A groundcrew corporal checks the post-side Lewis gun and mounting

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IMAGE *of* WAR

Submarine cruiser

Chatham Dockyard, Kent, September 12, 1925

Inspired by Germany's wartime 'U-cruisers', the Royal Navy revisited the submersible commerce raider concept between the world wars. Completed in September 1925, HMS X1 was intended to be the largest, fastest, deepest diving submarine of the time, and the Royal Navy would not operate a submarine with greater displacement until HMS *Dreadnought* in the 1960s. X1 was armed with four QF 5.2in Mk.I guns and six 21in torpedo tubes. The diesel-electric boat had excellent underwater handling and was designed to train her guns on a convoy escort while submerged, surface rapidly and fire without warning. She included a number of novel features including a pop-up rangefinder and separate ballast tanks for the magazines, which automatically adjusted for the weight of the shells as they were consumed. However, her propulsion was never satisfactory, and her desired diving depth never achieved. In 1930, cruiser submarines were banned by the London Naval Treaty, and X1 was placed in reserve after just five years' service. She was scrapped in December 1936.

BETTMANN/GETTY

NO LEGS, NO LIMITS

Phil Loder talks to Gurkha veteran, mountaineer and disability campaigner Hari Budha Magar MBE, who is determined to prove that no mountain is too high when it comes to his recovery

Hari Budha Magar MBE radiates energy and enthusiasm in a way that most people only dream of. The Gurkha veteran grew up in western Nepal and joined the British Army aged 19. Hari's father had wanted to be a Gurkha, but had not been successful and hoped one of his three sons would join the famous fighting unit.

There were more than 12,000 applicants in 1999, and Hari was one of just 230 recruits selected. He served in the 1st Royal Gurkha Rifles (1 RGR) and travelled widely during his time with the unit, before being injured in Afghanistan in April 2010. He is now based with his family in Canterbury, Kent, and through his adventures and expeditions aims to raise awareness and change perceptions about people with disabilities. The Gurkha Welfare Trust, On Course Foundation, Team Forces, Blesma – The Limbless Veterans, and Pilgrim Bandits are Hari's official charity partners.

When I spoke to Hari, he had recently returned from the United States where he had been speaking at a conference at the Explorers Club in New York. I asked him about the day in Afghanistan that changed his life, his road to recovery and the challenges he faced before and during his expedition to Mount Everest.

Phil. Did you know much about the Gurkhas when you were growing up?

Hari. Yes. We have a long tradition – Gurkhas have been serving for the United Kingdom since 1815. In Nepal, we are called Lahure – it came from Lahore, now in modern-day Pakistan, where Nepalese men used to go to join the Gurkhas. When I was growing up, I had never seen the British Army, but I had heard about it. I was born in a very remote village in the western part of Nepal and it was very rare to join the Gurkhas from there. In some families in other regions many generations joined the Gurkhas – great-grandfather, grandfather, father and sometimes several of a Gurkha's brothers, too. My case was different – I was fulfilling my dad's dream.

Phil. You served in the Royal Gurkha Rifles for 15 years?

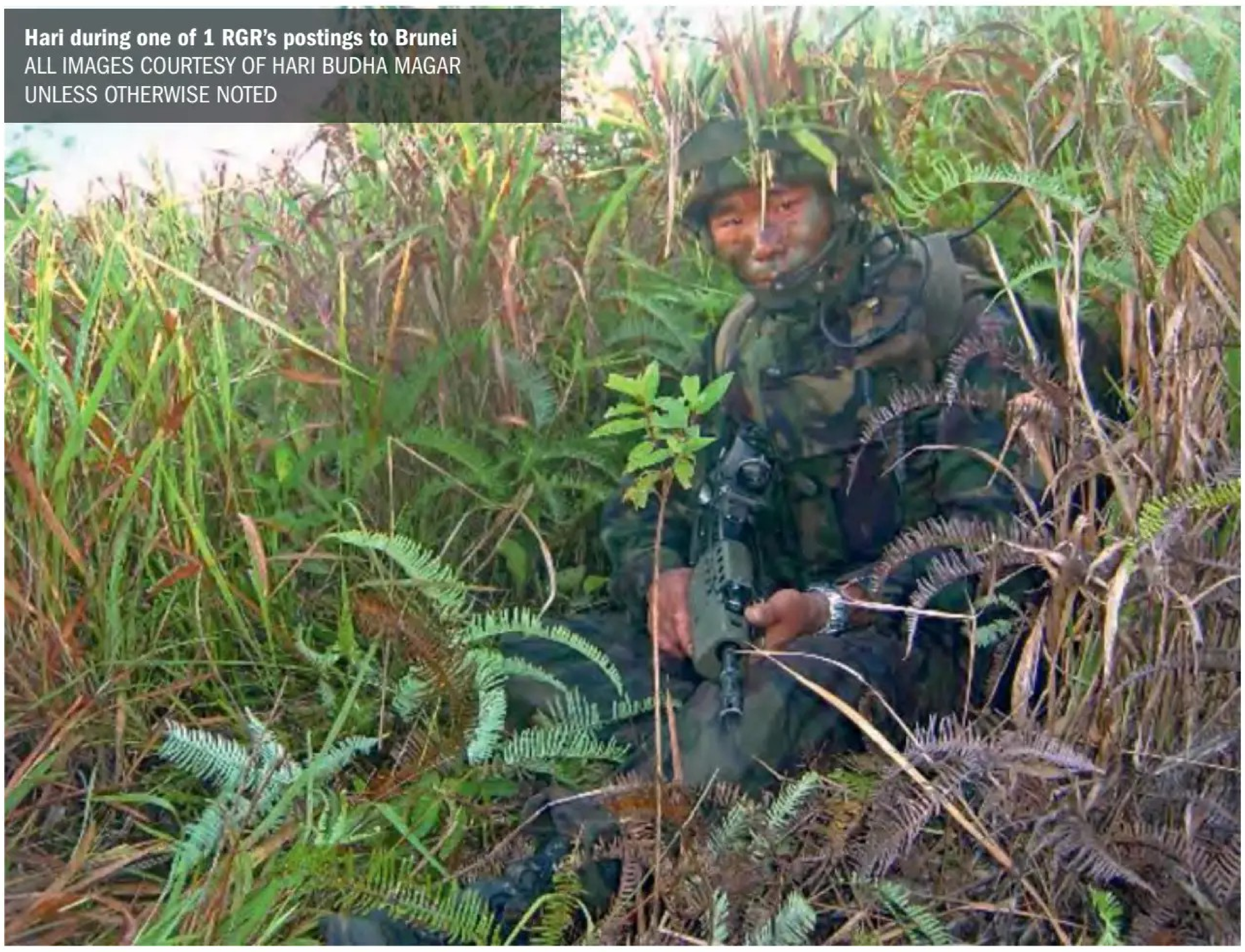
Hari. That's right, more or less. Initially, you do nine months recruit training, then we joined our regiments. I went to 1 RGR in the morning at 10am, and around 4pm we were flown to Kenya for more training. Once we were back, I learned about other areas such as counterinsurgency operations and being a combat medic, and we also went to France on exercise.

In 2000, we were posted to Brunei. Today there are two Gurkha infantry battalions, one based in the United Kingdom and one in Brunei. They were formed from the amalgamation of the four separate Gurkha regiments in 1994 and further consolidated in 1996 during the run-up to the 1997 handover of Hong Kong to China.

The two remaining full battalions change over every three years, so in 2000, 1 RGR moved to Brunei, and 2 RGR came back to Britain. From Brunei, I was able to visit New Zealand, Australia and Malaysia, which were fascinating. In 2003, 1 RGR returned to the UK and in 2004 we went to Canada, then from 2005 to 2006, I was deployed to Bosnia and Kosovo. After another three years deployed to Brunei, we came back in 2009, then I went to Afghanistan and got injured.

At the summit of Mera Peak in September 2017, Hari points out Mount Everest. In six years' time, he would conquer that mountain, too
KRISHNA THAPA

Hari served for 15 years in the Gurkhas RICHARD MUNN


Hari during one of 1 RGR's postings to Brunei
ALL IMAGES COURTESY OF HARI BUDHA MAGAR UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED

Phil. What happened on the day you lost your legs?

Hari. It was April 17, 2010, around three in the afternoon – quite hot. We had our orders and left Patrol Base 2. It was a familiarisation patrol, so we went with a team who were already on the ground. I was a corporal, but that day I was just doing a private soldier's job. As well as familiarisation, we were also giving security to two engineers visiting a damaged well.

We passed a couple of compounds, and everything was quiet. We were in single file, and I was the tenth man. The front guys were clearing the route of any IEDs, and we were walking in the same path – a very narrow path – and nine guys had passed, same route, when suddenly it went bang. I lost my legs and my life completely changed after that.

The guys did the drills when someone is down, and everybody's shouting "Man down!" and "Take cover!" – the very basic things. But you can't just dive because you might trigger another explosion. So, everybody just knelt down and assessed the situation. The first thing I noticed was ringing in my right ear – I had a radio in the left. I had been thrown up in the air and was facing backwards. I could see my friend at the back, and I told him: "Come on, come on – help me out!" And he said: "Just wait."

After about five minutes the guys approached, cleared the area around me and started putting tourniquets on. And when I looked down, I saw straight away that I didn't have my right leg. I had my left leg, but it was dangling as bone and skin, and my right arm was injured. Then a guy said: "Heli inbound in ten minutes," so maybe I was going to survive. That was my first thought: am I going to survive? Am I going to see my family again? Once I was in the helicopter, the guys gave me a mask and were cutting away the combat dress on my left side, and that is when I passed out.

When I woke up next morning, sitting there were my commanding officer and Gurkha Major (the most senior Gurkha officer) from our regiment. I was ashamed, lying in front of them. I didn't know what to say, so I said: "I'm sorry!" I thought that I had let down my boys, my team, my company and my regiment. I had been thinking about my guys, because I was second in command. The plan had been to go there, do the best job possible, try to keep everyone safe and come back home.

Phil. What were the steps towards your recovery?

Hari. It was difficult. I never thought that I would lose both of my legs. I thought that I might die. I thought that I might get shot, I might lose one limb, but I had never thought about losing both limbs and I hadn't seen people with no legs. I was very unaware of disability. When I was growing up in those remote villages in Nepal, disabled people were treated badly, even nicknamed. So, I thought that my life was completely finished – I'm going to sit in a wheelchair for the rest of my life. I didn't know whether my wife was going to

Three-year postings to Brunei gave the Gurkhas the opportunity to undertake extensive jungle training

Corporal Hari Budha Magar in Afghanistan a few days before he was injured

> *"We were walking in the same path – a very narrow path – and nine guys had passed, when suddenly it went bang"*

stick with me. All those bad stories played in my mind.

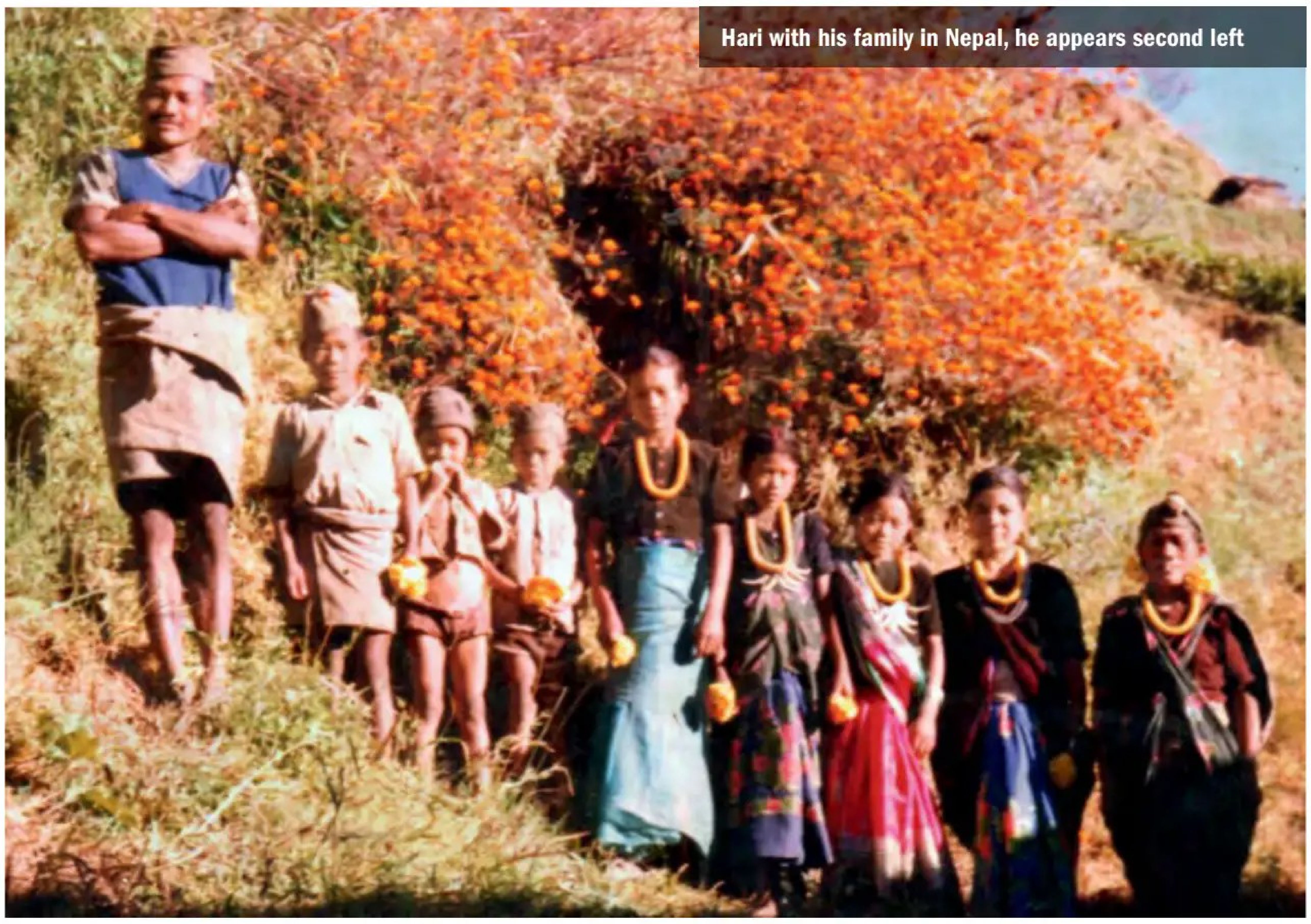
In Nepal, many people think that once you have disability you can't do anything – you are a burden, and it's also perceived as a sin from a previous life. This is what I thought initially, and I really struggled. I drank a lot to control my pain and emotion, and once I tried to take my life.

Then one day I thought: if I'm drinking this way, I'm going to die soon, and if I die it's the end of my story. In my culture, we are known mostly by what our parents have done – if our parents have done good deeds, we are known by that. If they have done negative things, then we are known by that. I didn't want my family, my children, to be known by negative things.

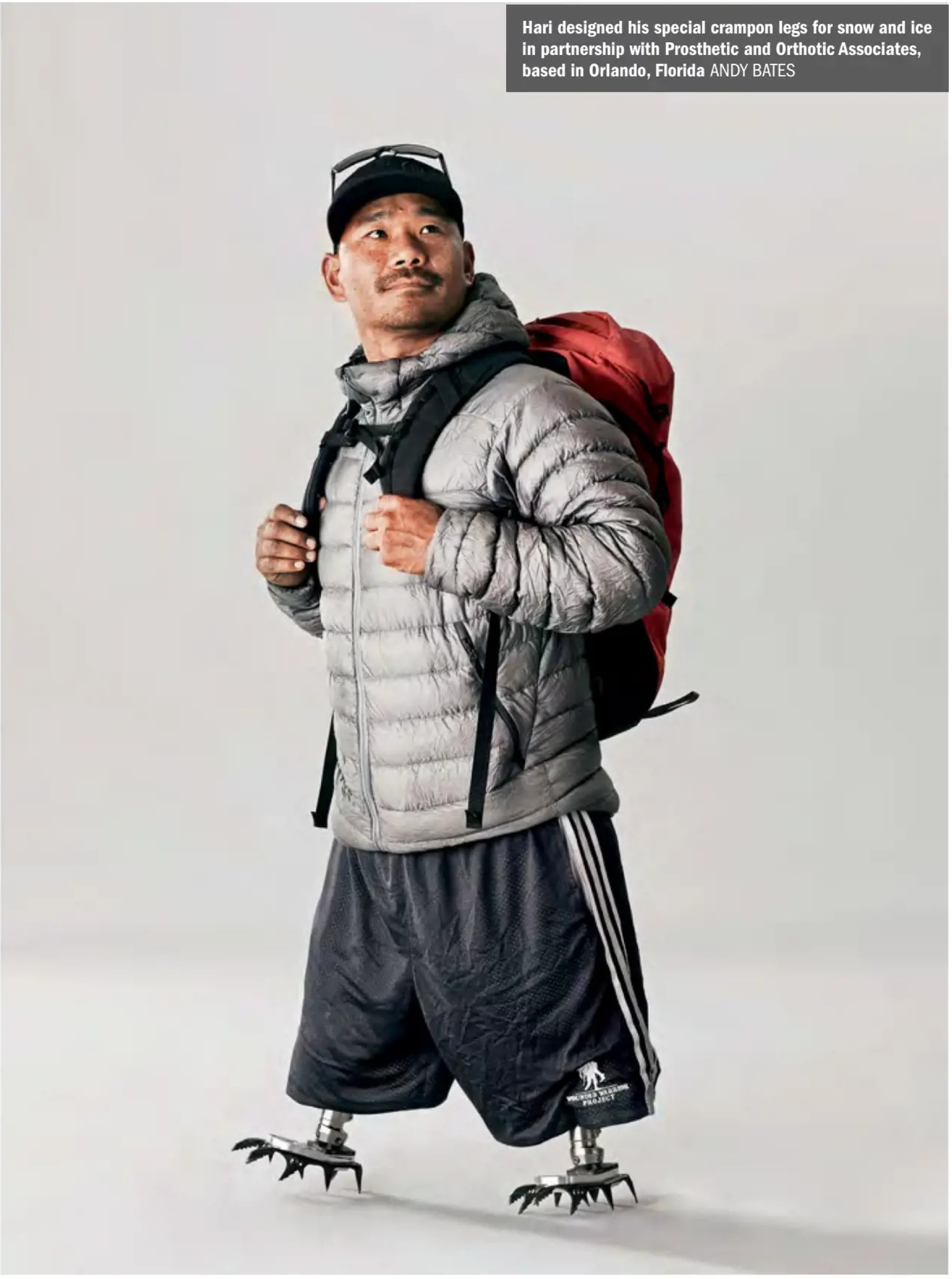
Phil. So was that the turning point where you started heading towards mountain climbing?

Hari. Initially, climbing wasn't my thing – I thought I couldn't do anything. But I wanted to live for my family, for my children. After that, I decided to live my life, but didn't know what I could do. And this is when I started taking up sports. The first thing I tried was skydiving – I thought that half my body's gone so if the other half goes, that's the end of my story. At that time, I didn't know how powerful the mind is.

We went to Netheravon Airfield, to the Army Parachute Association, and went up to 15,000ft. They opened the aircraft door, and the cold wind hit my face, and while I could look down, I could only see cloud – I couldn't see the ground. As we got ready for the tandem jump, I realised



Hari with his family in Nepal, he appears second left



Hari designed his special crampon legs for snow and ice in partnership with Prosthetic and Orthotic Associates, based in Orlando, Florida ANDY BATES

Hari scaled Mont Blanc on the European leg of his Seven Summits challenge. Europe's highest peak, Russia's Mount Elbrus, is currently unaccessible KRISHNA THAPA

Crossing a snow field on the ascent of Himlung Himal, Nepal

Sheltering from a heavy snowfall on the Himlung Himal expedition

that even if I was happy to die, I was still scared. I remember thinking that the Gurkhas' motto is: "It is better to die than be a coward" – I'm a Gurkha, I can't be a coward. So, I screwed up my eyes and we jumped out.

When we landed safely, it became a bit of a magical thing. I realised that even if I don't have legs, I can do something, and after that my aim was: what can I do physically after losing both my legs? As I said, I didn't know just how powerful the mind is.

Then I tried pretty much all the sports in the Paralympic Games, and I skied, I skydived and I kayaked. I liked that I could do anything – just in a different way. Like skiing – I love skiing, and I used to ski two-foot standing. Now I ski sitting on a chair on one ski, with outriggers in my hands. I can go down the same route and as fast as I used to go, and I can have the same fun. Then I found that anything is possible, if we adapt our life according to time, situation and our ability.

Phil. What was the attraction of climbing Mount Everest?

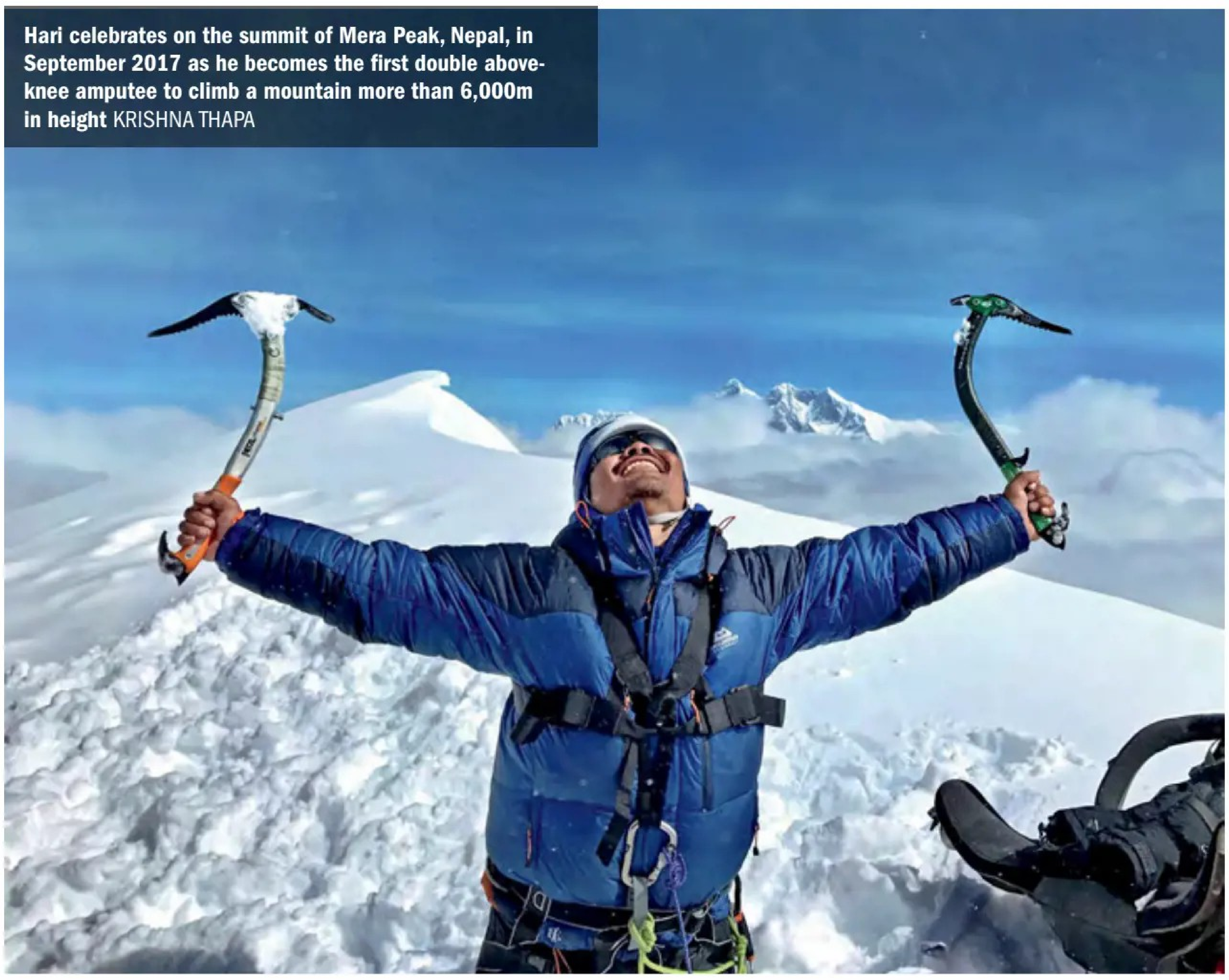
Hari. Whenever I was looking up at snow-capped mountains, I was thinking of Mount Everest. From a very early age, we were educated that Mount Everest is the tallest peak in the world, and it's in Nepal. We take it as our symbol, identity and pride for Nepal – we are very patriotic about it.

I was always very curious when I was a child about climbing Mount Everest, and I read the story of Sir Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay. I wanted to climb it when I was in the Gurkhas, but there was Iraq and Afghanistan, I had a good career in the army, and also, I didn't have the money or time for climbing. An expedition to Everest takes two months and I doubted that any of my superiors were going to give me two months' leave to go and climb it, plus all the training beforehand.

So, I've always been fascinated with Everest, but I didn't know whether I would be able to do it. I went to Nepal in 2016 and tested myself – was it physically possible and would my body cope with the altitude? I did that and was okay, so I said that I was going to climb it. Then there was no way of coming back.

Phil. How long did the expedition take?

Hari. My total expedition to Mount Everest was 64 days from the UK, going to Nepal and coming back again. We climbed Mera Peak to acclimatise ourselves, and then flew directly from there to Everest Base Camp – I had trekked to the Base Camp in 2022.


Hari celebrates on the summit of Mera Peak, Nepal, in September 2017 as he becomes the first double above-knee amputee to climb a mountain more than 6,000m in height KRISHNA THAPA

> *"When we landed safely from the skydive, it became a bit of a magical thing – I realised that even if I don't have legs, I can do something"*

We had to wait a long time for the rope to be fixed and for the route to be open to the summit, but also for the weather to get better. Already three members of rope-fixing teams had died in the Khumbu Icefall. That was a shock. We waited 19 days at Base Camp, then climbed up to Camp 2, thinking that the weather was going to get better. But Camp 2 was crazy – the wind nearly blew us away, and lots of tents were blown away. We stayed two nights and came back down again. Finally, the weather improved, and we were up the mountain and ready for an attempt on the summit in mid-May.

Phil. But you faced other challenges before you reached the mountain?

Hari. I thought that this 'journey' would take one-and-a-half years – so I would climb 6,000m, 7,000m, then head to Mount Everest. But it didn't work out that way. There were no legs designed for a double above-knee amputee to climb mountains, so we designed them. Initially, nobody believed that I could climb a mountain – not even my family and friends. I had some money from my compensation from the army and I used that to climb some mountains. After that, my friends and family thought that maybe I could do this, so they started giving me money. And later, communities, charities and then some corporates helped to raise funds.

I was aiming to climb Everest in 2018, but in 2017, the Nepalese government brought in new rules that banned double amputees and visually impaired climbers. They took the view that disabled climbers would put more people at risk, but my perspective is that you can't take away someone's right because you think that they can't do it. Picking out one group was discriminatory. We tried various approaches to change this, but finally had to go to the Supreme Court in Nepal to overturn the ruling – which we did.

By this time, though, it was too late for 2018, and we couldn't raise funds during 2019, 2020 and 2021 because of COVID, so after that we aimed for 2023. Many times, I thought about what excuses I could make to give up, and if I had known that all those problems might happen, I wouldn't have even started. But once my friends started giving me money, then I had to do it. At social gatherings they would ask my wife and children: "When is your dad going to climb Mount Everest? Is he going to climb or not?" And my wife said to me: "Okay, just go and climb it!"

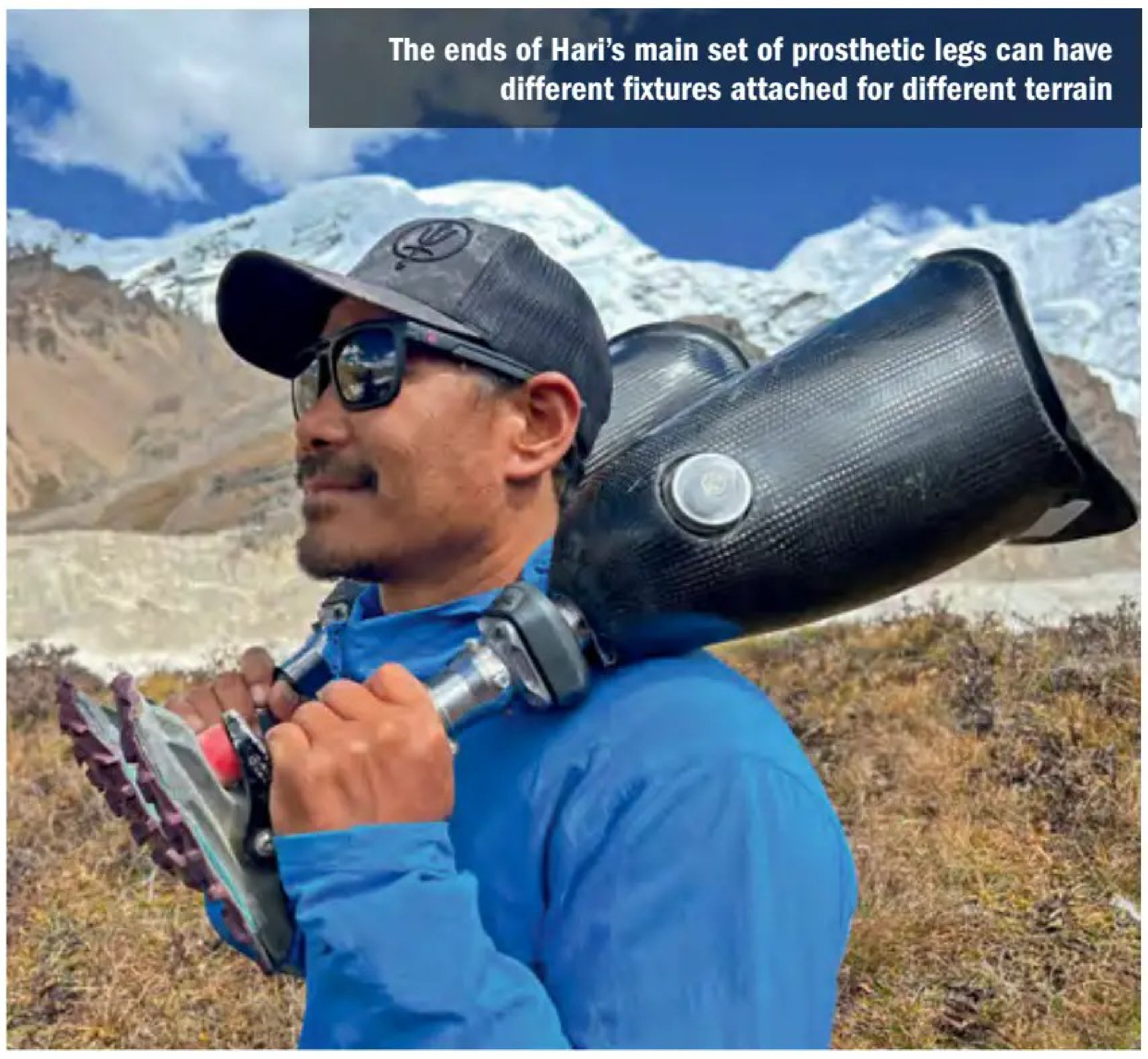
Phil. How was the final ascent to the summit?

Hari. The last part was difficult. We had climbed up from Camp 3 to Camp 4, which took us 14 hours. We arrived at six o'clock in the evening of May 18, and the guy in charge said: "We're going for the summit in two-and-a-half hours." I was already knackered. I didn't say anything but thought to myself: "Okay, I have just got to" – it took nearly six years to come up here, and I definitely couldn't raise the funds to come back again. So, I decided that, as long as my team were safe, I would keep going until I collapsed. I thought that even if I collapsed, my team could pull me down because we were a big team of 11.

We finally left at 9.50pm and took the whole night to reach the Balcony, and there the leaders decided that some of the climbers would go up and some would go back down. The sun had risen and

EVEREST BASE CAMP
5364m.
Hari was the first double above-knee amputee to use Ottobock Genium X3 legs to trek to Everest Base Camp SHANTA NEPALI

Hari's prosthetic legs need regular cleaning and maintenance during an expedition NANDA BUDHA MAGAR



The ends of Hari's main set of prosthetic legs can have different fixtures attached for different terrain

> *"I was the first-ever double above-knee amputee to climb Everest. We summitted at 3.10pm. We created history!"*

was shining on the South Summit and I thought that I would just go slightly up and then come back down. But six of the guys were happy to keep going up.

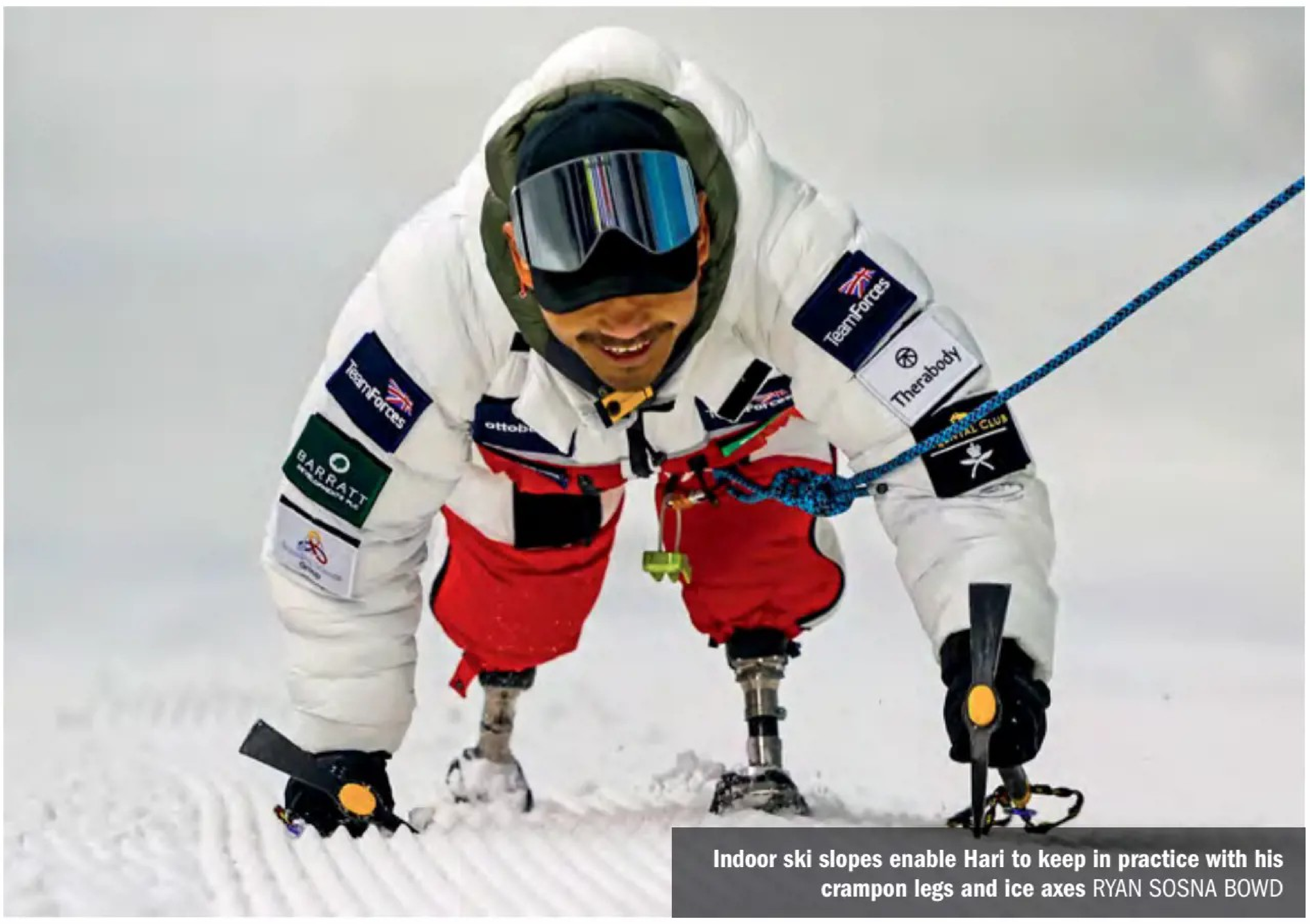
One guy dropped out, so five of us kept climbing, and we went to the bottom of the South Summit – it was beautiful up there. I had heard many stories of people who didn't make it to the Main Summit – they got onto the South Summit and were very proud of that. So, we decided to go up to the South Summit, but when we got there we could see the Main Summit. I asked the guys if we had enough oxygen, and could we make it? They said yes, so instead of coming down, we kept going up.

We connected new bottles of oxygen and at the Hillary Step met two people who were coming down from the Main Summit. After that, there was no way we were going back. As we approached the Main Summit, the weather was really windy and snowy, so we couldn't see much. With about 100m to go I got emotional – I was the first-ever double above-knee amputee to climb Mount Everest. We summitted at 3.10pm. We created history!

We tried to take some pictures, but our phone wasn't working! Luckily, the guys had two GoPros, and one of those worked. It's about evidence, so that even if you die, somebody can find those cameras and know: they made it to the top. I gave high fives to everyone and cried like a baby. As we descended, two guys left us at the Hillary Step and went ahead. As three of us were coming down, halfway to the South Summit my oxygen ran out again and we didn't have any more. We thought that a guy was bringing oxygen up – if we hadn't

Hari's training in the UK includes scaling climbing walls RYAN SOSNA BOWD

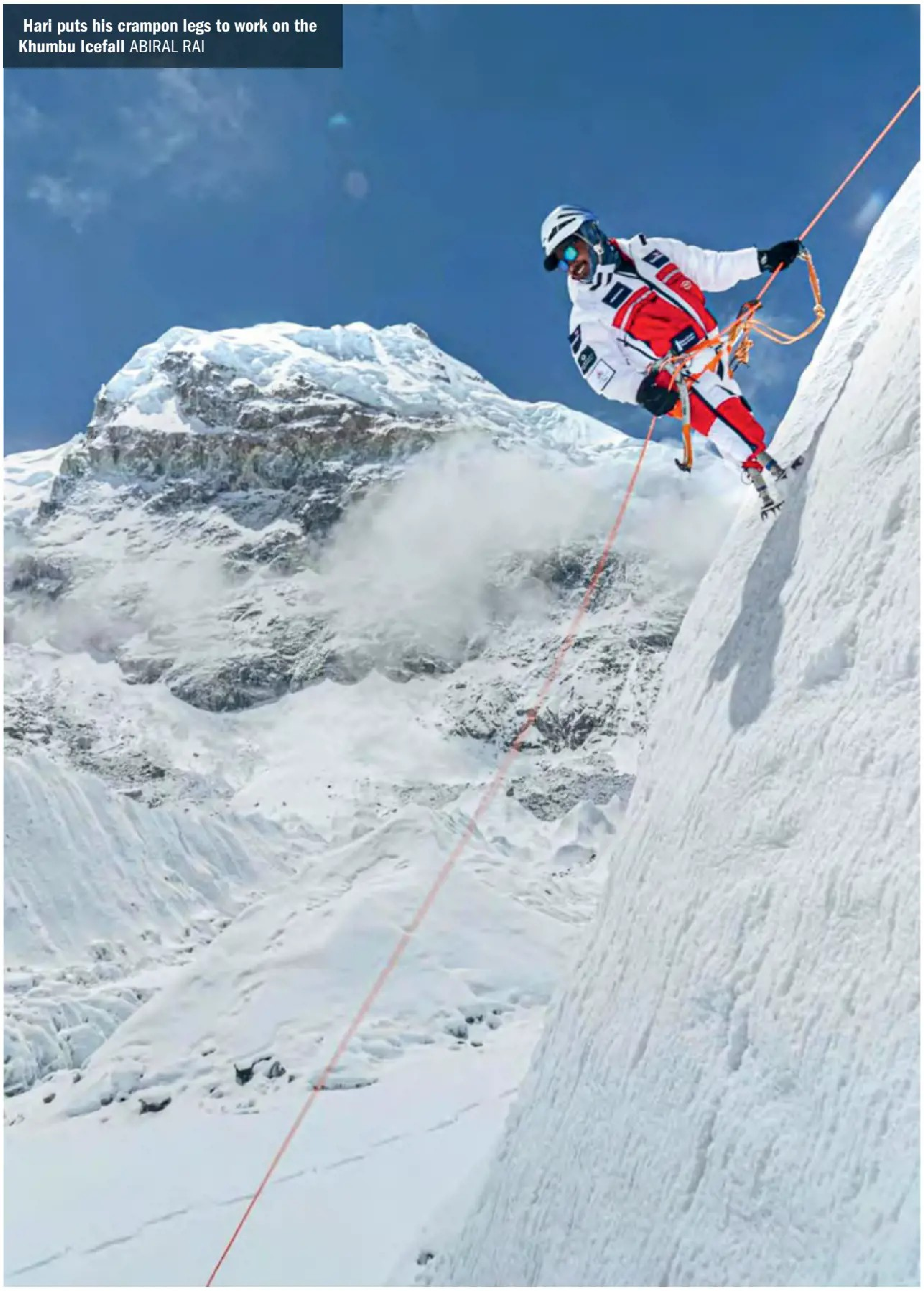
As another step in his preparation to climb Mount Everest, Hari trekked to Everest Base Camp in 2022 SHANTA NEPALI



Indoor ski slopes enable Hari to keep in practice with his crampon legs and ice axes RYAN SOSNA BOWD

Dame Joanna Lumley is a great supporter of Hari and was patron of the Mount Everest Expedition in 2023 RYAN SOSNA BOWD

Hari, Krishna Thapa (climb leader, in blue goggles) and the team on the summit of Mera Peak ahead of the attempt on Mount Everest in 2023 ABIRAL RAI



Hari puts his crampon legs to work on the Khumbu Icefall ABIRAL RAI

thought that, then we wouldn't have gone up to the Main Summit. The Sherpa gave me his oxygen, went down without oxygen himself, and someone came up with more oxygen, really saving our lives. From the South Summit down to near Camp 4, I just slid on my back, holding the fixed line, tearing apart my summit suit in the process. It took 25 hours and 10 minutes to climb up to the Main Summit and back down to Camp 4. When we got to Camp 4, that was the best sleep I've ever had.

In 2023, a record 478 permits to climb Mount Everest were issued by the Nepalese government. And for the first time in Everest history a permit was issued to a double above-knee amputee to attempt to climb the mountain. However, I have to mention just how very dangerous it can be. About 52% of the climbers successfully summited Mount Everest that year, but a record 17 people lost their lives.

Phil. Congratulations on being awarded the MBE. How did it feel to be recognised in that way for what you had achieved?

Hari. Thank you! Honestly, I have done my challenges to raise awareness of disability and to inspire others to climb their own mountains. I have been given many awards now and some of them I didn't even know what they were. But I do appreciate recognition for my work.

Phil. What's next in your campaign to change perceptions of people with disabilities? And what's your next adventure?

Hari. I decided that I will dedicate my life to raising awareness of disability. This is not going to be changed overnight, so for the rest of my life – whatever I will be doing through sports and events, social work, business or charity – it will be raising awareness of disability. Disabled people can achieve anything they want

The weather closed in, but the final group of climbers reached the summit of Mount Everest on May 19, 2023. Alongside Hari were Mingma Sherpa, Jit Bahadur Tamang, Pasang Sherpa and Nanda Budha Magar NANDA BUDHA MAGAR

The Everest 2023 Flag incorporates the names of the organisations and individuals who supported the expedition. Hari took it to the summit of Mount Everest, but here he and Krishna Thapa have unfurled it at the top of Mera Peak ABIRAL RAI

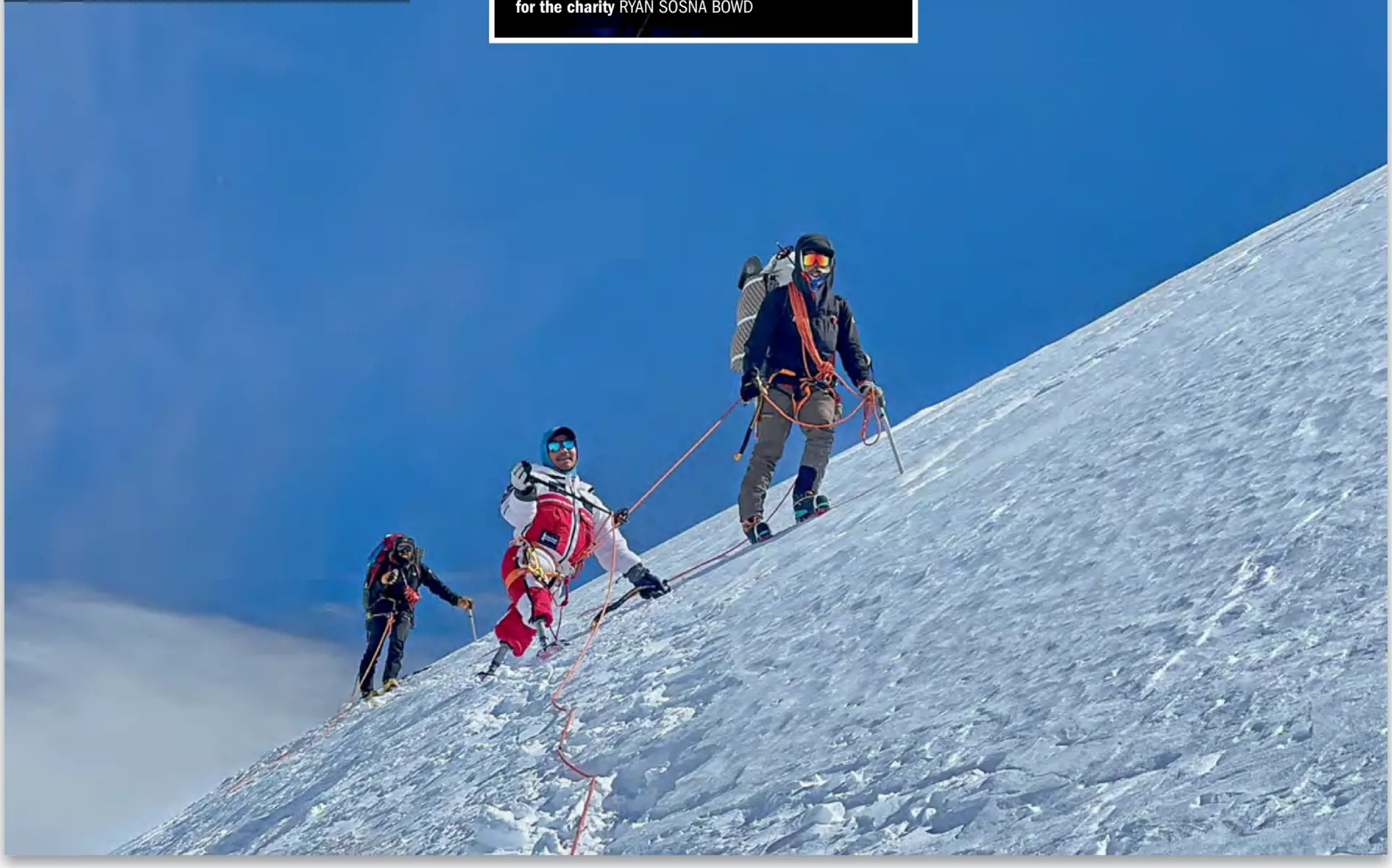
to. They can live happy, successful and meaningful lives.

I am currently part way through climbing the Seven Summits – the highest on each continent. I've done the four in Europe, Asia, Africa and North America, and I've got three left. The next one is Aconcagua in South America, then I've got Puncak Jaya in Oceania, and Mount Vinson in Antarctica. So, I will be climbing mountains for the next few years, then let's see what happens.

I have achieved more than I ever imagined. Whatever I'm doing for my challenges, from prosthetic legs to science and technology to so many other things, I will try to leave as many lessons as possible for future generations to learn from. This is why I am doing it. BW

To find out more about Hari's story have a look at haribudhamagar.com and to support Hari for his next climbs, head to crowdfunder.co.uk/p/hbm7summits

The Gurkha Welfare Trust has helped Hari with his climbing expeditions and now he is an ambassador for the charity RYAN SOSNA BOWD



The team's next expedition after scaling Mount Everest was to climb Mount Denali in Alaska

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GURKHAS, GUTS AND GLORY

Michael E Haskew gives a numerical perspective on the famed Gurkhas, who forged a distinct relationship with the British Empire and continue to serve in the British Army today

THE FIRST 5,000 GURKHAS

The army of the British East India Company fought the Kingdom of Nepal in a sharp, bloody war prompted by cross-border incursions and a rivalry for domination of the mountainous country. The 18-month war ended with the Treaty of Sugauli signed in March 1816.

While the British emerged victorious, there remained only grudging respect for the Gurkhali army. They had fought fiercely, displaying tremendous courage and disdain for death. Their bravery was noted and, as early as April 1815, British political agent William Fraser proposed the formation of a Gurkha battalion composed of defected soldiers. Major-General David Ochterlony of the Bengal Army endorsed the incorporation of a Gurkha unit with British forces.

Rapidly, the Nasiri Regiment was formed under British officers and went into action at Malaun Fort. An observer noted that the officers should have "the greatest reason to be satisfied with their exertions." Later, the regiment became the 1st King George's Own Gurkha Rifles and a legendary long-standing association was born.

327 KILLED DEFENDING HINDU RAO'S HOUSE

During the 1857 Sepoy Mutiny/Indian Rebellion, Gurkhas marched up to 30 miles per day to come to the aid of the hard-pressed garrison at Meerkut. They followed this with a desperate stand during the Siege of Delhi.

Outside the city, as British forces grew in strength to oppose the rebellious elements of the East India Company's army, the Sirmoor Battalion fought alongside two battalions of the 60th Rifles and a detachment the Corps of Guides Regiment in defence of Hindu Rao's House, the residency of the Maratha nobleman. Under fire for three months, the Gurkhas had reached Hindu Rao's House with 490 soldiers. In the course of the battle 327 fell.

The mansion was one of several positions along a ridge that had to be held to maintain the siege. Historians have since described it as a perfect location for a Hollywood-style last stand. The initial rebel sally sparked a gruelling 16-hour fight, and the defenders mounted a swift countercharge that threw the besieged back on their defences. As the Gurkhas retired to their positions, it was said that soldiers of every European regiment in the vicinity raised a cheer in acknowledgment of their bravery.

Their ranks thinned by fighting and the scourge of cholera and other diseases, the defenders of Hindu Rao's House

By the end of 1815, approximately 5,000 Gurkhas had entered service. A British officer noted: "Their soldiers are stout, thick, well-built men, in general: very active and strong for their size. They understand the use of the tulwar or sabre, and prefer close fighting, giving the onset with a loud shout: each man wears, besides his sword, a crooked, long, heavy knife, called 'cookrie' [kukri], which may be used in war, but is also of the greatest use in all common operations, when a knife or hatchet is needed."

Through the balance of the 19th Century, the Gurkhas fought side by side with the British East India Company and the British Army, becoming the nucleus of the British Indian Army. Additional units were formed, including the Sirmoor Battalion, which later became the 2nd King Edward VII's Own Gurkha Rifles, and the Kumaon Battalion, later designated the 3rd Queen Alexandra's Own Gurkha Rifles.

Gurkhas advance over rocky ground in Tunisia during World War Two TOPFOTO

had repelled more than 20 assaults by July 1857 and their numbers had been reduced by half. During one heavy attack, the 910 men able to shoulder a rifle fought off waves of troops numbering more than 10,000.

During the stand at Hindu Rao's House, an unbreakable bond was forged between the Gurkhas and their British comrades, who referred to them as "them Gurkhees of ours." At Delhi, the Sirmoor Battalion earned much recognition and, since they had no colours, a decorated truncheon was fashioned and later presented to them by Queen Victoria.

The defence of Hindu Rao's House helped the Gurkhas forge their reputation F BEATO/GETTY

HEROISM AT LOOS LEAVES 49 SURVIVORS

Members of the 1/4th Gurkhas during an inspection in France, July 1915. More than 100,000 Gurkhas served during World War One
H GIRDWOOD/BRITISH LIBRARY COLLECTION

During World War One, more than 100,000 Gurkhas served and 10% became casualties. The number of Gurkha battalions rose and, by summer 1915, several were engaged in the stalemate gripping the Western Front.

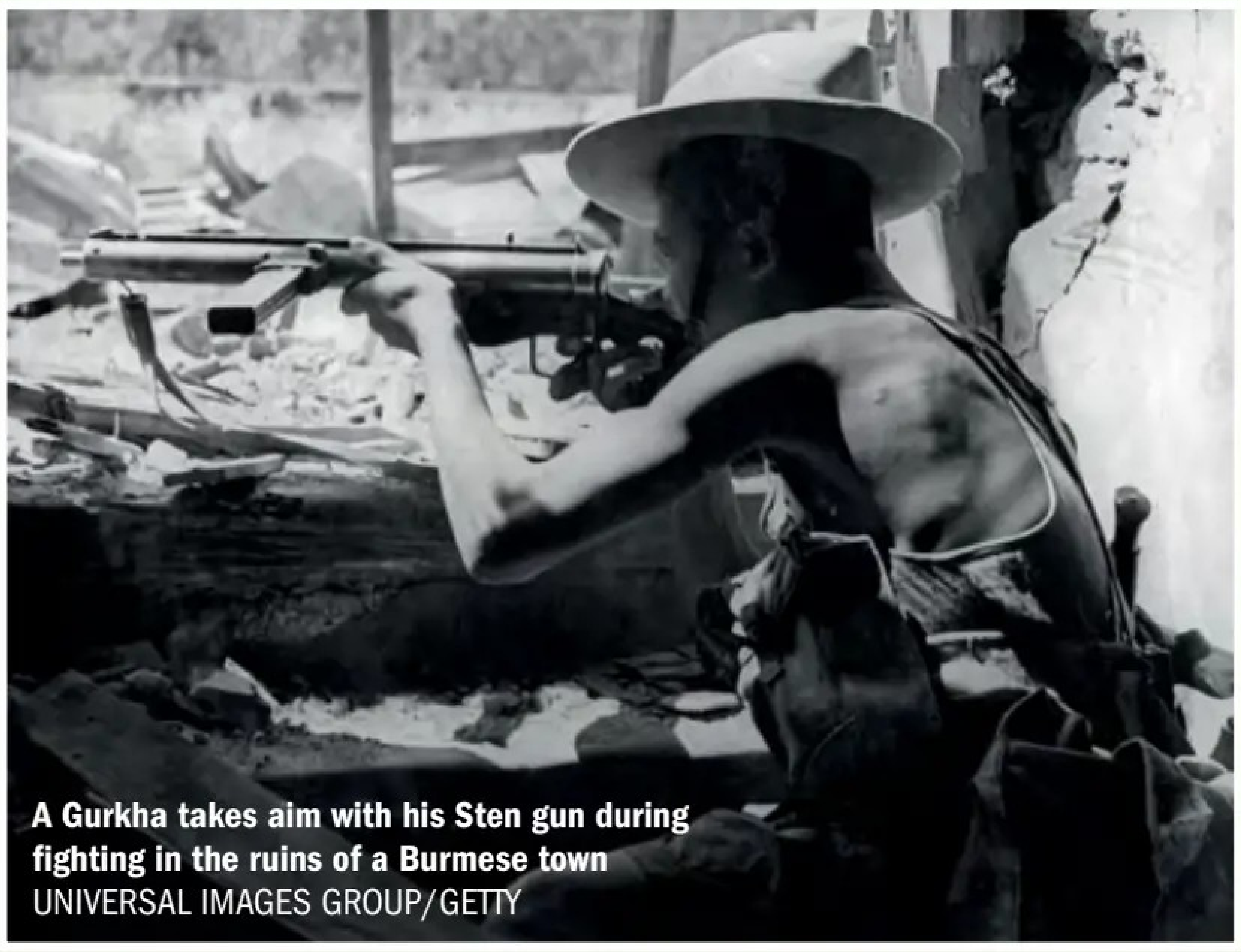
The Battle of Loos from September 25 to October 8, 1915, was the largest British offensive effort of that year and the first use of weaponised gas in the conflict. Though the Germans blunted the attacks, a stirring chapter in the history of the Gurkhas was written in courage, steadfastness and blood by the 2nd Battalion, 8th Gurkha Rifles.

As Captain Gerald Buckland, commanding the battalion's 'C' Company, surveyed the situation on the morning of September 25, he realised the original battleplan had come apart. His soldiers had spearheaded an advance and were ordered to link up with a unit on their right, but there was no sign of support. They were low on ammunition and their situation was growing more desperate by the minute.

The 2/8th Gurkhas had advanced at daylight, piercing two of three German defensive lines, but by 0830hrs, the attackers had been raked by machine guns and artillery and Buckland discovered he was the highest-ranking unwounded officer in the battalion. Reinforcements could not reach them, so Subadar (Warrant Officer) Sarabjit Gurung led a small force to confront a German effort to flank the precarious defensive position, only to be wiped out. By 1530hrs, it was apparent the 2/8th might be overwhelmed. Ordered to fall back, when the remnants of the unit reached relative safety, its original strength of 800 men had been reduced to just 49, every single one of them wounded.

At Loos, the British sustained 61,000 casualties, including 15,800 dead. The Germans referred to the battleground as "Der Leichenfeld von Loos" or "The Field of Corpses of Loos."

30,000 CASUALTIES IN 3 THEATRES


A Gurkha takes aim with his Sten gun during fighting in the ruins of a Burmese town
UNIVERSAL IMAGES GROUP/GETTY

In World War Two, the Gurkhas were committed in three crucial theatres against the Germans, Italians and Japanese. Some 130,000 men served, with nearly 30,000 killed and wounded, living up to the famous statement later made by Field Marshal Sam Manekshaw: "If a man says he is not afraid of dying, he is either lying or he is a Gurkha."

In North Africa, the 2/7th Gurkha Rifles served with the Eighth Army and was captured at Tobruk in 1942, but it did not go lightly into captivity. As bitter fighting raged and panzers reached the city, turning to cut off the 2/7, the Gurkhas were ferocious. Using the broken terrain, they inflicted heavy casualties and fought to the last round. An officer later wrote: "The men were fairly bursting with confidence. Things were a bit chaotic, but it was war, and it was fun. They had knocked everything for a six that had come up against them and had received almost perfect battle inoculation. Their overwhelming sense of superiority did not leave them until the end. They met panic – the most devastating of battle influences – with steadfastness and watched streams of demoralised troops passing through their positions with amused tolerance."

In Italy, the Gurkhas distinguished themselves throughout. The fight at Monte Cassino was among the most bitter of the war, and the capture of the Benedictine abbey was only accomplished with great loss of life. Although the 1st Battalion, 9th Gurkhas got to within a few dozen yards of its walls, there were few reinforcements available. They held out for nine days before withdrawing as supplies and ammunition ran out.

Twenty-three Gurkha battalions fought the Japanese in Malaya and Burma, alongside the British in the long retreat during the difficult early days, then in the huge effort to drive the enemy back, and also with the Chindits in the hot, disease-plagued jungle. In the epic battle of Imphal, Gurkhas struck the Japanese at close quarters, clearing positions with rifles, grenades and their famed kukris.

13 VICTORIA CROSSES

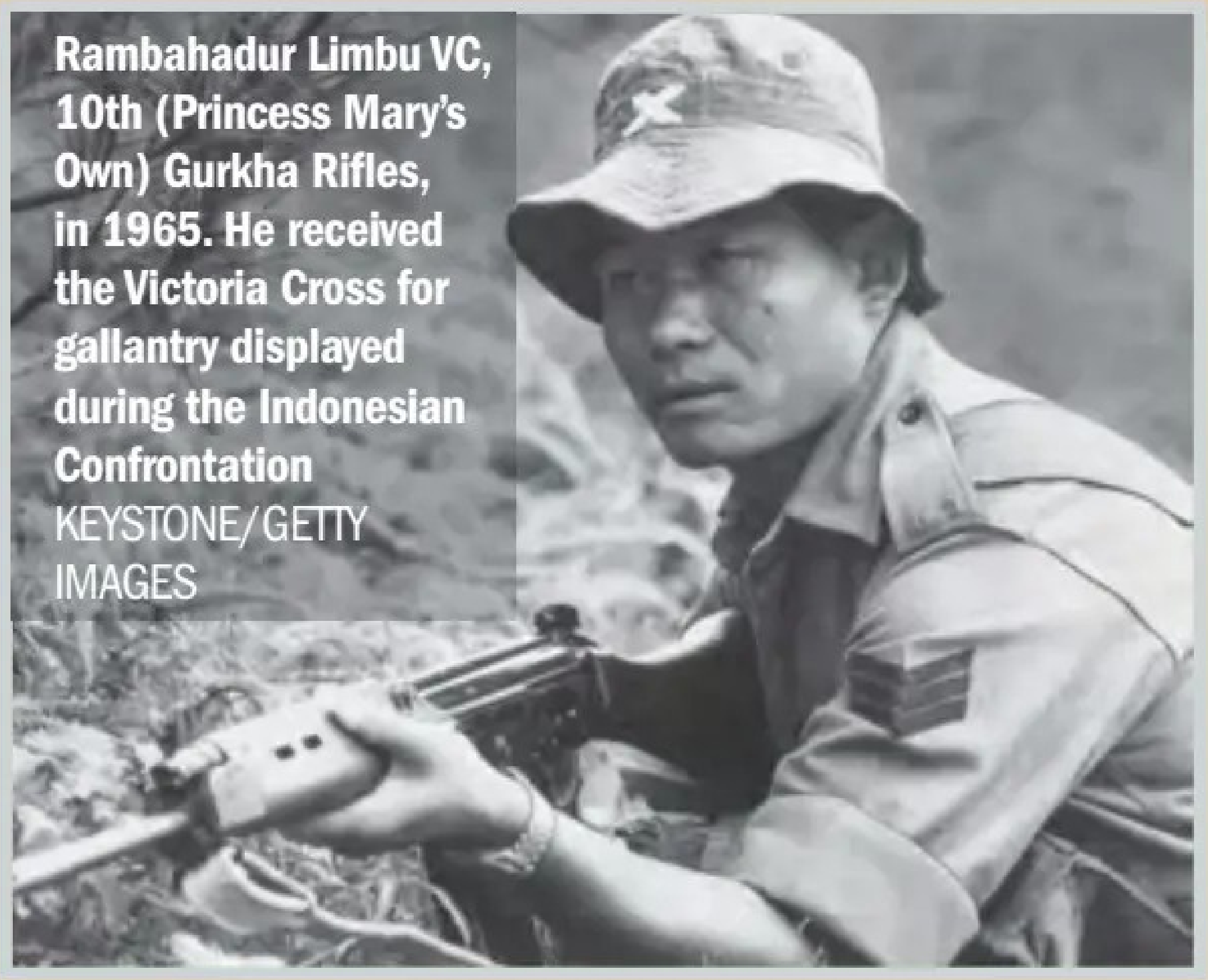
Since native troops became eligible for the decoration in 1911, 13 Gurkha soldiers have earned the Victoria Cross.

Examples of Gurkha courage under fire abound and the first VC to an indigenous Gurkha went to Rifleman Kulbir Thapa for his actions at Loos in 1915. Eleven Gurkha VCs were presented in World War Two, nine in Burma alone. More VCs have been awarded to British officers serving in the Gurkhas, while two Gurkhas, Nandlal Thapa and Chitrabahadur Gurung, received the Empire Gallantry Medal – replaced by the George Cross – for their efforts following the 1935 Quetta earthquake.

At Mogaung in Burma on June 23, 1944, Tul Bahadur Pun of the 6th Gurkha Rifles participated in an attack against a Japanese-held bridge. His citation related that they were caught in a crossfire and the soldier's section shattered. He found himself alone, but seizing a Bren and firing from the hip, continued the assault against a bunker. With dawn breaking behind him and his silhouette drawing heavy fire, he rushed 30 yards through ankle-deep mud and shot three enemy before the survivors fled. Post-war, Pun remembered the eventful morning a bit differently, asserting that he killed four with his Bren and three with his kukri. He also reported that he later used a flamethrower to dispatch 30 more.

On November 10, 1944, rifleman Thaman Gurung gave his life at Monte San Bartolo, Italy. During a patrol, Gurung forced two Germans to surrender and then moved forward, crossing slit trenches and firing bursts from his Thompson. Amid heavy resistance, he tossed grenades and continued to fire, covering his comrades until his ammunition ran short. When he moved forward a third time, Gurung emptied two magazines before falling in a hail of German fire. His heroism enabled the platoon to withdraw, saving many lives.

Lance Corporal Rambahadur Limbu of the 2/10th Princess Mary's Own Gurkha Rifles received his VC on November 21, 1965, during the Borneo Confrontation. That day, he was one of 16 Gurkhas on patrol, and as he went forward with two comrades, a hostile Indonesian position and about 30 enemy were encountered. When the Gurkhas were only ten yards distant, machine guns opened fire. Rambahadur rushed ahead and killed one fighter. The other two Gurkhas were wounded, but Rambahadur left cover twice, exposing himself to fire in pulling the wounded to safety, killing guerrillas in the process. His citation reads: "His outstanding personal bravery, selfless conduct, complete contempt of the enemy and determination to save the lives of the men of his fire group set an incomparable example and inspired all who saw him."


Rambahadur Limbu VC, 10th (Princess Mary's Own) Gurkha Rifles, in 1965. He received the Victoria Cross for gallantry displayed during the Indonesian Confrontation
KEYSTONE/GETTY IMAGES

Other stories of Gurkhas who exhibited tremendous courage and self-sacrifice worthy of decoration are equally moving or incredible. More recently, in 2010, Acting Sergeant Dipprasad Pun used all his ammunition and famously resorted to wielding a machine gun tripod to singlehandedly defeat 12-15 Taliban fighters, earning him the Conspicuous Gallantry Cross.

1 BRIGADE OF GURKHAS

Following Indian independence, six Gurkha regiments were designated to serve with India's army, while four remained with the British as of January 1, 1948. Through the years, these Gurkha formations have been augmented, redesignated and deployed in numerous conflict zones.

Headquartered in Malaya, the Gurkhas fought in the Emergency from 1948-1960, then in Borneo from 1962-1966. After their primary station was transferred to Hong Kong, the Gurkhas deployed to Cyprus, the Falklands conflict and the Gulf War. Following the return of the Crown Colony to China in 1997, they have been based in Britain.

In 1994, the four rifle regiments of the Brigade of Gurkhas were consolidated into a single unit, designated the Royal Gurkha Rifles. It has served in Kosovo, Iraq, Afghanistan and other trouble spots, preserving and enhancing the reputation of loyalty and fierceness earned in two centuries of service.

Today, the Gurkhas form roughly 5% of the British Army's manpower, with the average Gurkha serving for 24 years. Recruitment is highly competitive, with 20,000 annual applicants for a few hundred positions. Prospectives undergo a 21-week selection including the gruelling 'doko race', a 2½-mile run carrying 55lb of sand up a mountain. Those selected complete nine months of training in Britain.

When the Gurkhas have been called to fight, the battle cry "Ayo Gurkhali!" ("The Gurkhas are Here!") has struck fear in the hearts of their enemies. Today, it means that the Gurkhas are "here" to stay.

Men of the 2/7th (Duke of Edinburgh's Own) Gurkhas on a river patrol in North Borneo, 1965. Post-partition Gurkha units retained by the British military have served world over...
RON CASE/KEYSTONE/GETTY

...and remain an important part of the British Army today
AMEL EMRIC/ALAMY

Novelist Alexander Baron wrote an iconic text based on his Normandy experiences ALL IMAGES VIA THE AUTHOR/NICK BARON UNLESS NOTED OTHERWISE

D-DAY’S MASTER STORYTELLER

Melody Foreman delves into the mind of the British author who penned a must-read trilogy of novels shaped by his horrific experiences of the Normandy landings

British troops disembark from their landing ship and come ashore on Gold Beach
MIRRORPIX/GETTY

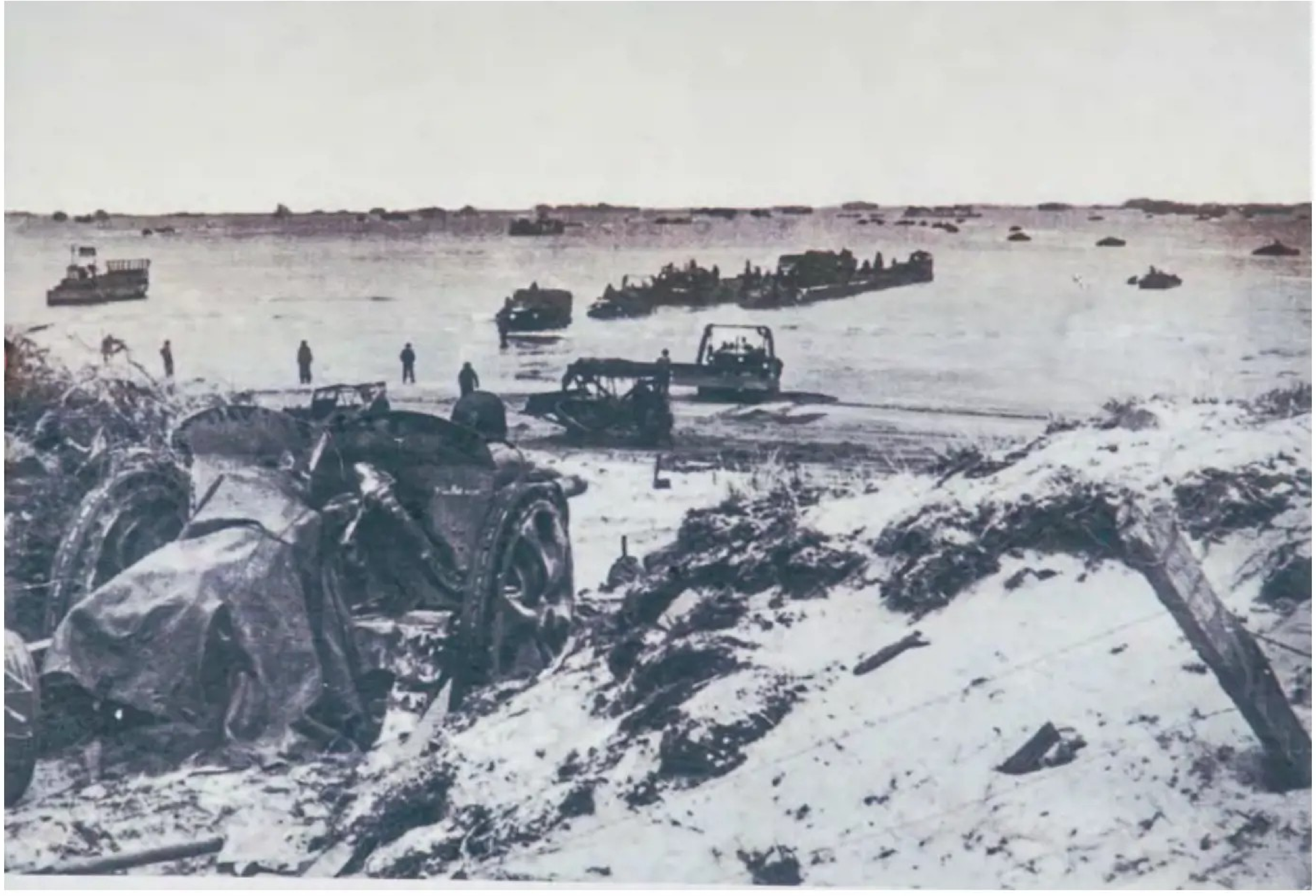
“He was the greatest British novelist of the last war and among the finest, most underrated, of the postwar period. He burst on the literary scene in 1948 with his debut novel, *From The City, From The Plough*, described by [writer and literary critic] V S Pritchett as “the only war book that has conveyed any sense of reality to me”.

That is how former Foreign Office director of communications John Williams described Alexander Baron in his obituary for *The Guardian*. Baron rose as one of Britain’s most influential authors. His aforementioned 1948-published work revealed his talent for capturing the perspective of the soldier with realism and accuracy that many would argue remains rare in the vast field of historical fiction. However, by the time Baron had written his trilogy of World War Two novels; *From the City*, *From the Plough*, *There’s No Home*, and *The Human Kind*, he had already served with the Pioneer Corps in Sicily and experienced the brutalities of the June 1944 D-Day landings first-hand.

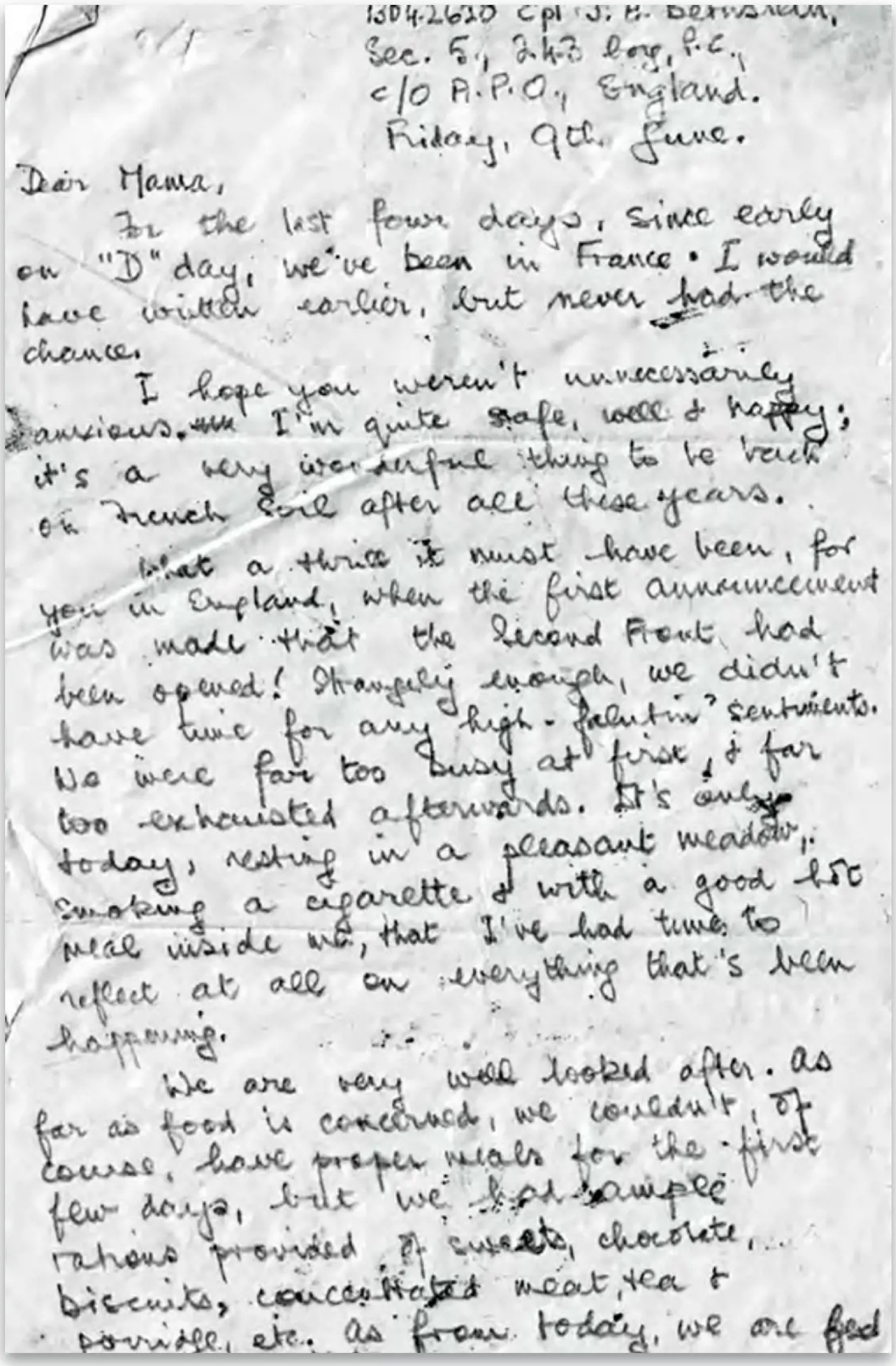
Baron had also extracted himself from his once ardent membership of the British Communist Party as the cruelties of war substituted his youthful idealism for a deep distrust of dogmatic politics. Indeed, in his memoir *Chapters of Accidents,* written in the 1990s and published in 2022, Baron’s recollection of his wartime experiences – especially at Normandy – coupled with his discovered perspective of social realism indicates the essential powerhouse of a novelist he was to become. He realised early that there was no substitute to the honest experience when it came to storytelling and grounded his works. As a result, his unsentimental trilogy is a powerful depiction of conflict and of soldiers thrust together in the ultimate test of their inner strength and character.

Powerful recall

The experiences on which Baron based his storytelling clearly lingered with him, stating 50 years after his arrival at Normandy that the events of June 6, 1944, were like “something out of a film”. “I clearly recall I was blown up – but when I turn back to what I wrote about it only a few years after the event, I see all in the scene that I have forgotten; I am, as it were, looking at a film about an actor who resembles me.” The Pioneer Corps’ task was to land on the heels of the assault troops to deliver their carriers, heavy weapons and lorries loaded with ammunition and petrol. The assault platoons touched down on Gold Beach at 7.25am. The first Pioneers beached 20 minutes later.



ABOVE: **Vehicles drive ashore at Gold Beach from a Rhino ferry barge while bulldozers work to clear the beach of obstacles. Reputedly taken about 30 minutes after the first assault, Pioneers – including Baron – arrived soon after the first waves to help clear the beach and to support the infantry**
DAVID PARKER/ALAMY



1304.2620 Cpl J. A. Bernstein,
Sec. 5, 243 Coy, P.C.,
c/o A.P.O., England.
Friday, 9th June.

Dear Mama,

For the last four days, since early on "D" day, we've been in France. I would have written earlier, but never ~~had~~ the chance.

I hope you weren't unnecessarily anxious. I'm quite safe, well & happy; it's a very wonderful thing to be back on French soil after all these years.

What a thrill it must have been, for you in England, when the first announcement was made that the Second Front had been opened! Strangely enough, we didn't have time for any 'high-falutin' sentiments. We were far too busy at first, & far too exhausted afterwards. It's only today, resting in a pleasant meadow, smoking a cigarette & with a good hot meal inside me, that I've had time to reflect at all on everything that's been happening.

We are very well looked after. As far as food is concerned, we couldn't, of course, have proper meals for the first few days, but we ~~had~~ ample rations provided of sweets, chocolate, biscuits, concentrated meat, tea & porridge, etc. As from today, we are fed

LEFT: **A reassuring letter home from Baron. Sent to his mother from Normandy, he says he is “quite safe, well and happy”**

“On our right, the Hampshires were landing. At the top of the beach, I saw a scatter of men falling like skittles. After the war I met a film director who had commanded a landing ship on D-Day. He told me that many of the Hampshires were young boys who clung to the ship’s rails in terror when they saw men being killed in front of them. The sailors beat their hands free and forced them down the ramps onto the beach.”

Baron’s recall includes powerful details of how his craft nosed inshore through a “mass of floating rubbish”, and of spotting a dead sailor floating out to sea, followed by a dead soldier with his “waxen face turned up to the sky”. Ahead, ashore, engineers were clearing the beach until one set off a mine, leaving him “wriggling like a cut worm”. Piercingly, his reportage continues with his spotting of disembodied heads floating by as he made it to land. Then the Rhino ferry on which he landed was hit. He remembered not the impact of the shell, but did recall “the steel deck open upwards in ragged petals, being lifted from the track on which I stood, feeling myself lying on my back, with seawater freezing through my clothes, my eyes being dazzled by the bright whiteness of the sky, the seeming lowness with which torn pieces of metal swooped down out of the whiteness, and the boots of my section clattering past me. I glimpsed two corporals lying beneath green water that was tinged with blood. One of them had his eyes open.”

ABOVE: **British police separate members of Oswald Mosley's British Union of Fascists from Communist counterdemonstrators at London's Trafalgar Square. It was this political world that Baron, initially an ardent socialist, thrust himself into before becoming disillusioned** SUEDDEUTSCHE ZEITUNG PHOTO/ALAMY

While Baron, then a corporal, never set out to go through Normandy with the outlook of an observer, he did "store up experiences". He recalled arriving at the head of the beach where an officer gave him directions to go left, and he "trudged past dead and wounded Green Howards", the remnants of a company brought to much grief by the ruthless fire from the defenders of a gun battery.

Yet, in the chaos of battle, it was a comparatively insignificant encounter that inspired *From The City, From The Plough:* "I was only aware of being a soldier among soldiers and my conscious mind was occupied only as theirs were. The process of literary creation is partly unconscious, that of original conception sometimes entirely so. An incident in my Normandy novel reproduces something I saw in the early days of the campaign – a trivial enough event, but I recognise it as the seed. An infantry battalion was trudging up to put in an attack, a straggle of bemused bumpkins toiling along under the weight of their gear in a single file on the left-hand side of a lane, shepherded by their spirits with feeble jokes and wise cracks.

"I stood at the entrance to a field watching this. I am sure that without my knowledge a crucial matter was settled in my mind. I would write a book about the life and death of one of those unseen county battalions."

LEFT: **The Pioneer Corps fulfilled light engineering tasks on the home front, as shown here clearing rubble from a bombed London hospital, and in the field overseas** PASTPIX/TOPFOTO

A battalion made up of newcomers to war seen by him may well have been the unit Baron choose to base his writings on. Caught by a horrific bombardment as they attempted to form up, many dozens were killed and wounded with the rest scattered, too demoralised to fight. "These poor souls had plodded along, unwilling but let their legs carry them to butchery. How utterly senseless it all was."

Pioneer

Baron's acute observations of humanity in crisis, the suffering, despair, frustration and heroism, fuelled him to write his highly acclaimed masterpiece, first published by Jonathan Cape. At first the book was to be called *The Fifth Battalion* but Cape's wife Kathleen intervened as she thought it too dry. She suggested the more intriguing *From the City, From the Plough,* and the novel became a bestselling literary classic.

But who was Baron? The quiet, complex man who became such a leading light in British literature? As a soldier he was known by his birth name, Joseph Alexander Bernstein, and only became known as Baron post-war. One source suggests that his publisher advised that there was already an established author called Alexander Bernstein, and a five-letter surname would fit better on the spine of his books.

Baron/Bernstein was born in Maidenhead on December 4, 1917, and grew up in Hackney, London. His father, Barnett, was a Polish-Jewish immigrant who settled in London in 1908 and worked as a master furrier. He married Baron's artistic mother Fanny Levinson after she moved to Maidenhead to escape the Zeppelin raids. As a boy their son was fascinated by the adventure stories of World War One pilots and was hooked by all aspects of aviation.

After leaving Hackney Downs School, the young Baron joined the Labour League for Youth and became a Communist activist. Along with his friend Ted Willis (later writer of the BBC's long-running *Dixon of Dock Green*) he set up a newspaper that condemned the rise of fascism in the East End. Working undercover as a Communist apparatchik, Baron felt part of something. The 1930s was a busy, hedonistic time but as the prospect of war with Germany loomed, he realised he wasn't being listened to, felt used, then guilty by

LEFT: **Baron as a young soldier in Sicily, 1943, after participating in the Operation Husky landings**

association. The party's record on anti-Semitism had made him nervous too, and Baron slid out of further Communist activity.

Disillusioned by the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact, a non-aggression treaty between Germany and the USSR, Baron joined the British Army in late 1939. He wanted to serve in the infantry, but due to his poor eyesight he was instead assigned to the Auxiliary Military Pioneer Corps – from 1941 the Pioneer Corps. This formation was tasked with completing light engineering duties such as clearance of ordnance, road and airfield construction. As such, they were often in the battlespace, and Baron was among the first to crash ashore in Sicily, Italy and of course, Normandy.

Meanwhile, Baron's journalism had given him the opportunity to develop his talent for structured reportage, in turn nurturing a passion for short, sharp storytelling. In his war novels, Baron's grasp of the psychology of soldiering is breathtaking. Through illuminating and compelling dialogue, his characters mirror the impact conflict has had upon him.

"He observes very carefully. He writes about the boredom of waiting, the clawing uncertainty. He doesn't

BELOW: **Baron with three colleagues in uniform. Military comrades replaced the party of loyalty for Baron, and he sought to understand and process their collective experiences that he witnessed** glorify combat. He doesn't shrink from the gore," explained former BBC journalist and author Andrew Whitehead who co-edited a book about Baron's novels (*So We Live*) and took part in a recent 'in conversation' event at the Imperial War Museum in London to discuss the writer's work. To Whitehead's delight, the IWM has recently re-published Baron's trilogy to great acclaim.

As remarkable as Remarque

Comparisons to the stand-out great novel from World War One – Erich Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front* – were inevitable, but Baron's trilogy, especially *From the City, From the Plough*, deserve star billing. As V S Pritchett boasted in 1948: "We have waited a long time for the Second World War's *All Quiet on the Western Front.*"

Indeed, Alexander Baron is widely considered to be the best for authenticity. He lived, breathed and closely watched with his writer's eye the perils, joys and sorrows of soldiers united by a common cause. Baron realised that most novels and poetry that came out of the world wars was written by officers. These books, he implied, had a socially and politically distant narrative, whereas, as a humble NCO, Baron believed he had learned the value of writing from the ground up.

He recognised too the prospect of death for the characters was forever present, and his books reveal how they grapple with the complexities of thinking and feeling at the same time. The tension, anticipation, the pitfalls of knowing and not knowing where or when battle would take place. Would they live, or would they die? The characters endure and writhe about in their situation and thrive and fight to survive the emotional greyness they find themselves locked in.

Such confusion is often concealed by banter, boozy days on leave, one-night stands, doomed love, card games run by the 'doggy boys'. The latter being gamblers from the city who also act as black marketeers, artfully manoeuvring their way through the discipline of military life. *From the City, From the Plough* explores the different social dynamic between the hard-nosed young recruits brought up on the mean streets of an urban life, and the gentle country boys bewildered without the safe reassurances that come from the rural habitats they were forced to leave behind.

It is these healthy young 'bumpkins' of the 5th Battalion, Wessex Regiment, who days before had marched with "pink roses twined in the netting of their helmets" that are sent in to a wheat field on a 'one last favour' mission only to be mowed down by machine gun fire. Their CO talks softly of his sorrow for "his country boys", the proverbial lambs to the slaughter. While his narrative is evocative, compelling and somewhat lyrical in places, Baron's son Nick, associate professor in History at the University of Nottingham, explained his father was not a poet-warrior: "Dad's war novels are largely autobiographical.

"My father didn't speak about the war, much like any one of his

BELOW: **A British battalion marches toward its embarkation point prior to D-Day, perhaps inspiration for Baron's fictional 5th Battalion, Wessex Regiment, which he bloods in Normandy**
FOX/GETTY

ABOVE: ***All Quiet on the Western Front*** **author Erich Remarque in a photograph taken by an unknown Dutch photographer. Baron's novels have been inevitably compared against Remarque's iconic book**

generation, but the emotional impact of it can be read in his novels. Writing about it helped process what he went through. Only once did he open up to me about his experiences, when I was a teenager doing a history project. What he told me about the Pioneer Corps and the Green Howards on D-Day, and his experiences of the landings, was precisely what he had written in his novel. What he was able to say, he had already written – and perhaps writing rather than speaking, and in the form of fiction, was the only way he could find words to describe what he had gone through.

"My father was always the observer in his novels. I couldn't say if he was one of his characters too. The imagery in his books is tremendously powerful. He wanted to find out if there was a truth to war and convey its impact on normal people living through very extraordinary times."

Graphic and brutal

Three to four months after D-Day, once his unit reached Belgium, Baron was transferred to the infantry. This was in the run up to the Battle of Scheldt, but soon after his transfer it became evident Baron was suffering from battle fatigue and was sent to recuperate in Northern Ireland. As historian Whitehead explained, Baron "had been like a lot of men, who by 1945 felt completely hollowed out by war."

While in Northern Ireland, Baron was hit by an army lorry and suffered a head injury. His recovery was slow, and he wasn't a well man. Despite this, just after the war he worked on the docks – an exhausting job. His friend Ted Willis invited him to join the Unity Theatre and edit its magazine. It was there where he met his future wife Delores, and later became editor of *Tribune* magazine. While living in London, he got to know J B Priestley and other intellectuals, and after *From the City, From the Plough* was published, Baron went full time as a writer.

"As a child I was always aware of his work as a novelist," said Nick. "He was advanced in his career when I was born. My Dad was 11 years older than my mother who had been an amateur actress, copywriter, and later wrote radio plays and scripts. She was more outgoing and realised her role was to look after him. Ted Willis and the Olympic high jumper Sir Arthur Gold were my godfathers.

"I was four when I became aware of my father's huge collection of books, fiction and non-fiction. His amazing library included military history, but a great many first-person testimonies of soldiers' experiences, such as Keith Douglas' *Alamein to Zem Zem*, or Frank Richards' *Old Soldiers Never Die.* He was not only trying to understand how others experienced war, but how others had tried to render their experiences in writing.

"It was only when I was much older that I understood his eminence as a writer. During my lifetime he mainly wrote screenplays for television. In the 1980s, I recall many Sunday evenings watching his BBC adaptations of classics like Thackery's *Vanity Fair*, Bronte's *Jane Eyre,* and Dickens' *Oliver Twist*. My Dad is very much apparent in *The Human Kind,* his volume of wartime short stories. He was a quiet and introspective man. In the army he was surrounded by these big chaps who, it seems, enjoyed the company of a quiet, slight, bespectacled, intellectual and took my father under their wing."

The Human Kind (1953) opens with a tale of youthful innocence in 1940, and the through the succeeding stories the reader is drawn into an understanding of the wartime lives of ordinary soldiers. The book is similar in places to Baron's second war

ALEXANDER BARON AND FILM

When I sat down with Nick Baron to discuss his father, we veered into the subject of war films. In 1963, director Carl Foreman adapted Baron's *The Human Kind* but it was renamed *The Victors*. Instead of being about the British Army, the film features a group of US soldiers who fight in Italy, Normandy, and help preside over an uneasy peace in occupied Berlin. *The Victors* aimed to appeal to an US audience and boasted an all-star cast including Albert Finney, George Hamilton, George Peppard and Jeanne Moreau.

"My father was dismayed that the film was about American rather than British soldiers," explained Nick. "He knew the British Army, its social dynamics and tensions – and that was what he had written about. He also felt that Hollywood stars overpowered the story, which was about ordinary men and women. The writers even wrote their own version of the novel which my father then promptly rewrote for them.

However, those who had read *From the City, From the Plough* will surely conjure up scenes similar to those in the 1998 epic *Saving Private Ryan*. Baron had no involvement in the production of the film, but his son believes that the book *may* have helped influence its creators. Everyone remembers the chaotic and scenes of soldiers running towards the guns on the beaches of Normandy. We watch the men slaughtered, writhing in pain, clutching at stomachs blown open. For many, the sight of the bewildered GI who bends to collect up his severed arm is almost too much to bear. None of these robust scenes shot by Oscar-winning director Stephen Spielberg would have remained in the collective memory if they did not contain the raw and everlasting resonance of authenticity.

Did Baron, feel its powerful association with the *From the City, From the Plough?* "He did watch *Saving Private Ryan* and thought it a good film. I don't know whether Stephen Spielberg read my father's work, but I agree the imagery of the film's opening scene is as powerful as that in the narrative in the novel. *Saving Private Ryan* reflected the hopelessness at the end... just like *From the City, From the Plough*. Those characters who make it through find no real sense of redemption. There is always the silence."

It's almost as if *From the City, From the Plough* is the 'Bible' from which war film screenplays should be written.

novel, *There's No Home* (1950) which is set in Catania, Sicily, and features interactions between British soldiers, and a doomed romance between a sergeant and a strong-willed Sicilian woman. Baron's memoir *Chapters of Accidents* is as graphic and brutal as the fictions based upon his real life experiences.

Capturing experiences

Nick Baron told me: "*From the City, From the Plough* was my father's favourite novel. I think it was his masterpiece. A film was optioned on it in the 1990s but nothing happened. The rights are still available."

LEFT: **Baron cleaning his Lee Enfield rifle during World War Two**

"I remember Dad as affectionate but remote. I was born when he was in his 50s so I came as a bit of surprise. He worked in his study from 9am to 6pm, sometimes taking an hour's break at lunchtime for a five-mile march. At 6pm he'd come downstairs to listen to the BBC Radio 4 news. He was traumatised by the war, but his years in the army and his experience of combat were defining moments of his life. He was fortunate that his talent as a writer enabled him to try to come to terms with what he'd witnessed."

And, as if to confirm the authenticity of his work, Baron received a huge volume of letters from soldiers after the publication of each novel. His writing captured their experiences and perhaps helped them come to terms with what they'd lived through.

Alexander Baron died on December 6, 1999, in Hampstead, London. He was 82. Nick continues to play an active role in keeping his father's legacy alive, and Baron's literature and memory is championed by a group of notable authors and historians. After his death it was pointed out in many obituaries how it was his war trilogy for which he will be remembered. Here were three books offering proof that there need be no contradiction between the serious and the popular. The war instilled in him a belief in the decency of ordinary people and a monumental suspicion of those touting big ideas. His work is characterised by a humanity that deserves to endure. BW

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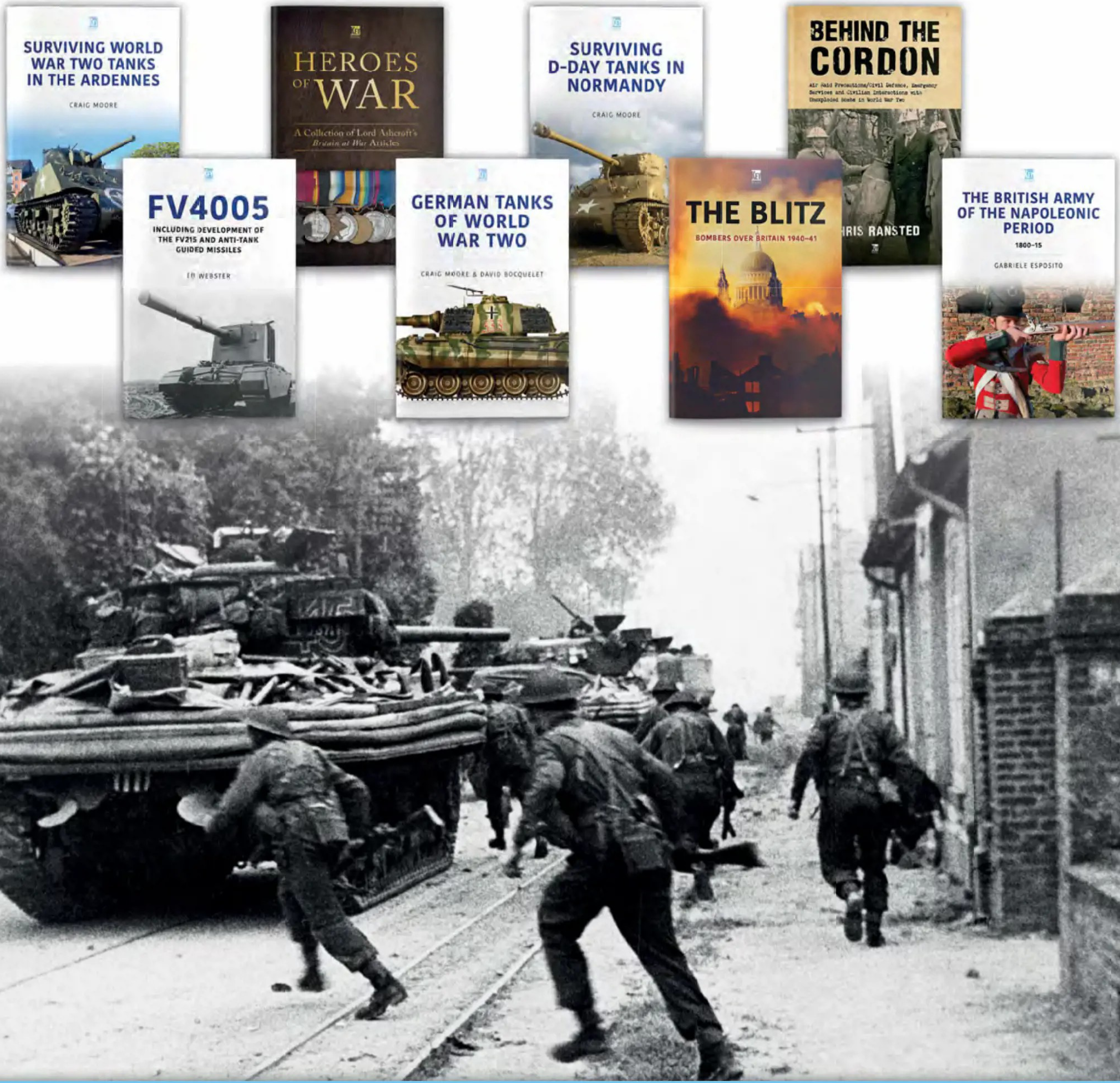
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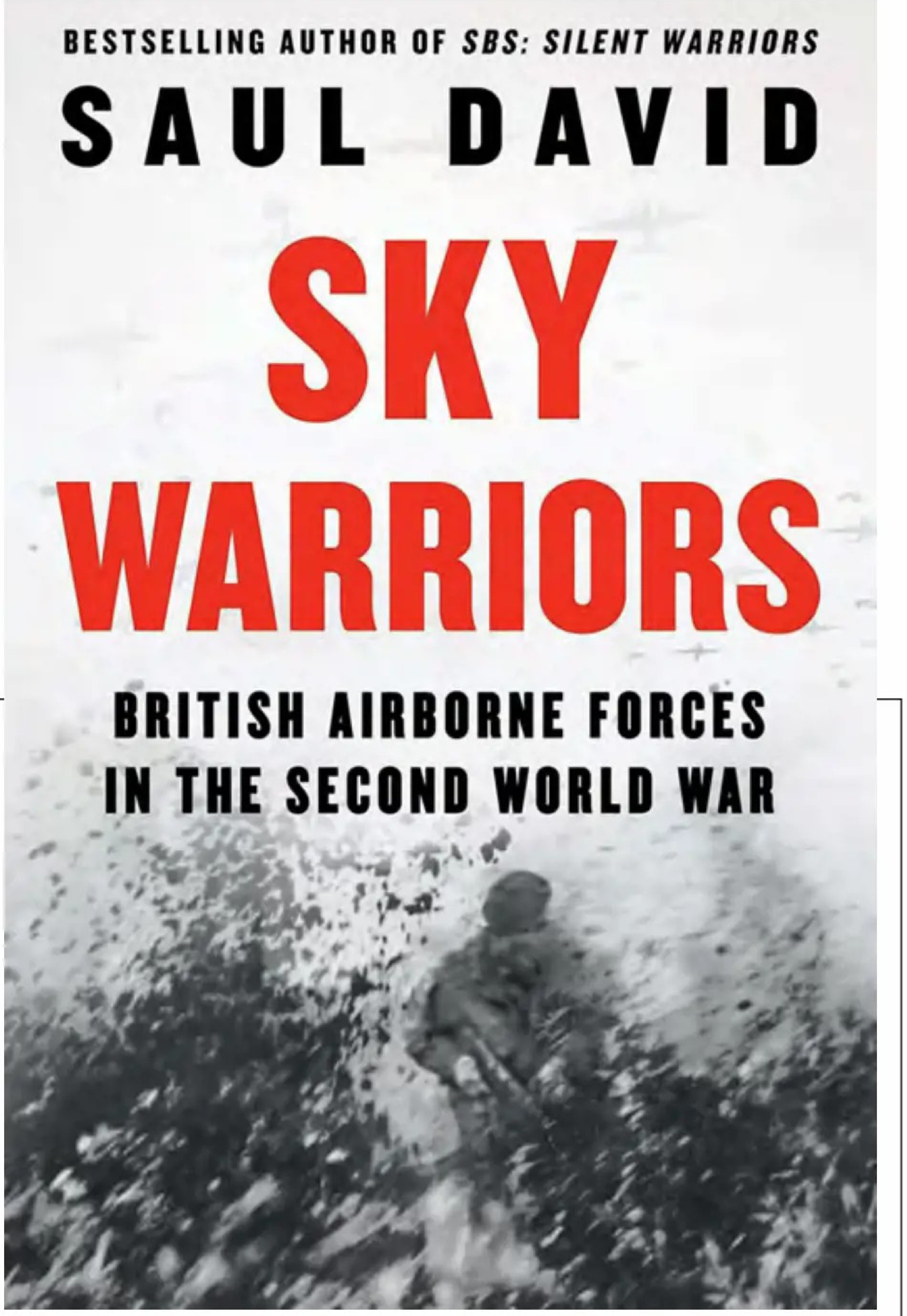
Sky Warriors

British Airborne Forces in the Second World War

By Saul David


BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF SBS: SILENT WARRIORS
SAUL DAVID
SKY WARRIORS
BRITISH AIRBORNE FORCES IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR

If you are anything like me, your bookshelves bear a close resemblance to a reference library, with many different books looking at the same topic or event. Historiography asserts that historians have bias and that is why readers need to possess several books written from different perspectives in order to truly understand each subject. However, books and bookshelves are expensive – and besides, where would the TV or the hoover go? Which is why any fan of history appreciates single books that can give a lot of information.

In *Sky Warriors*, this is exactly what author Saul David has sought to produce: a comprehensive single-volume study of British airborne forces during World War Two. You might imagine that a subject like this has been covered before, but that is not the case. So rather than buy the two existing books written in the 1950s, you can buy this new one and put it in your reference library.

Saul David has been on top form in recent years. His 2022 book *Devil Dogs* was one of the finest history books this decade and *Sky Warriors* is of equal brilliance. Parts one and two deal with 1940-42 and 1942-44 respectively and are of great value to the student of World War Two. Their strength lies in the explanation and knitting together of the place airborne forces held within the early years of the war. David introduces us to Louis Strange, Raymond Quilter, J B Tait and Tony Hibbert, with significant details supplied to bring the men and their story to life. He makes the case that it is the people, not the aeroplanes and assorted kit, that are the driving force behind history.

What becomes apparent is that the men who successfully carried out difficult tasks in the early years of the war would be given greater opportunities later. Louis Strange set up the parachute training establishment at Ringway, Quilter designed the parachute that British troops would use throughout the war and beyond, Tait would later sink the *Tirpitz* and Hibbert commanded a Brigade HQ at Arnhem. In a diverting little mention, David reveals that Hibbert's father earned three Military Crosses and a Distinguished Flying Cross in World War One. This could have been cut from *Sky Warriors* on the basis that it is irrelevant to the story of British airborne forces in World War Two, but I am pleased to know such an outstanding fact.

After such a strong start, the third, fourth and fifth parts of the book – dealing with D-Day, Arnhem and crossing the Rhine – seem shallow. I don't mean that they are superficial, because the history is sound and the details clear, just that such battles have been explored by entire books before and here they are given only single chapters. There is still huge interest to be found within these sections – for instance, prior to assaulting the Merville Battery on D-Day, Colonel Terence Otway recruited 12 WAAFs to flirt with drunken Paras to see if they gave away the plan, but not one man took the bait. Given the limitations of covering the entire war in one book, it is understandable why the major battles might feel a little thin compared to other dedicated texts. David does not come to any groundbreaking conclusions, preferring to knit together the entire wartime story succinctly.

Ultimately, *Sky Warriors* manages the delicate task of balancing the space provided to the author and the material needed to be included. Here is a comprehensive study of British airborne forces in World War Two written by one of Britain's leading historians.

Reviewed by Toby Clark

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References/notes: Y
Appendices: N

Reg Seekings (Theo Barklem-Biggs) and Dave Kershaw (Bobby Schofield)
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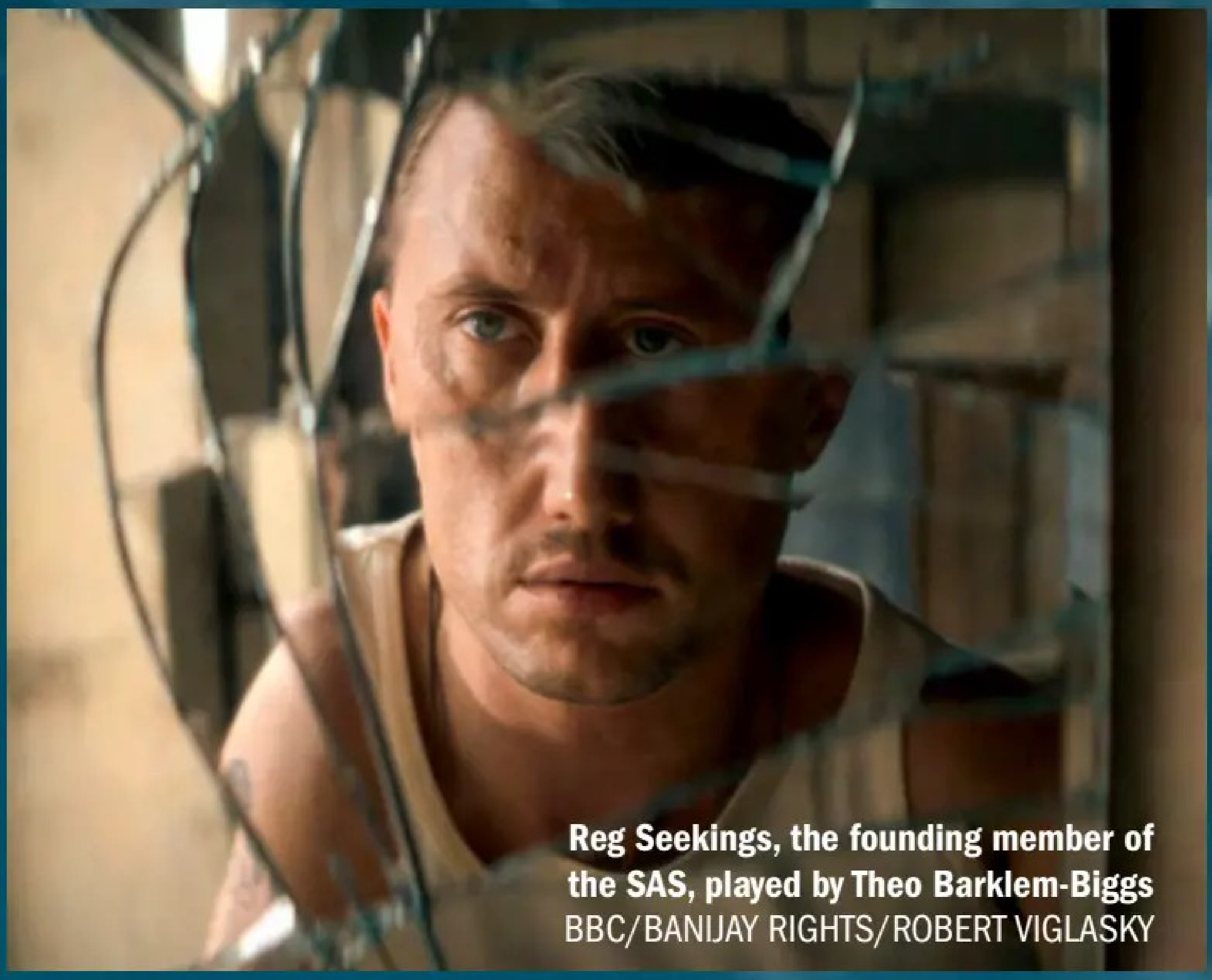
SAS ROGUE HEROES... *RELOADED*

Tom Baker previews episode one of the second series of SAS Rogue Heroes, the BBC's gripping and violent World War Two drama described as a "modern British classic"

PLOT SPOILERS

Steven Knight's *SAS Rogue Heroes*, the BBC's hit historical drama based on author Ben Macintyres's book of the same name, returns with a high-stakes second season focused on the continuing genesis of Britain's Special Air Service amid the carnage of World War Two. Picking up the story of the regiment in the spring of 1943, season two follows Paddy Mayne as the new commander of the ragtag warriors who wade into an entirely different form of warfare, facing the mounting pressure of proving their operational relevance to GHQ and British High Command.

Season two begins in the aftermath of the SAS's triumphs in North Africa – the main plot of the first series – with David Stirling (Connor Swindells) now languishing as a POW in an Italian camp, and Mayne (Jack O'Connell) reluctantly taking over the mantle of command, all while struggling to 'keep the ship afloat' as the regiment takes on raw recruits and repels the constant threat of disbandment.



Reg Seekings, the founding member of the SAS, played by Theo Barklem-Biggs
BBC/BANIJAY RIGHTS/ROBERT VIGLASKY

Long gone are the days of daring, guerrilla-style operations seen in North Africa, as the series expands the unit's scope by delving into its reconstitution as the 'Special Raiding Service', and its new operational tenure for 'unconventional style assaults' as the Allies prepare for Operation Husky and the liberation of Axis-occupied Europe.

While the previous six episodes of *Rogue Heroes* focussed on high-octane action, season two takes a tonal shift as the narrative delves into the human cost of battle, and its psychological consequences. Mayne, strongly adverse to authority, must tackle the rigorous challenges and unfamiliar responsibilities of leadership, while returning cast members like Reg Seekings (Theo Barklem-Biggs) and Johnny Cooper (Jacob McCarthy) struggle to maintain their façade of emotional invincibility as they are worn down by increasingly tough and brutal missions.

Furthermore, while the first season could, at times, feel like a light-hearted glorification of Commando-style raids, season two's sombre, more mature approach to action highlights the visceral reality of what these men went through and how it changed them – both physically and psychologically. Perhaps the best example so far comes as the men prepare to assault an Italian battery at Capo Murro di Porco, Sicily, on July 10, 1943. Mayne is made aware of several British Airborne gliders falling well short of their landing zones, leaving dozens of paratroopers helpless in the cold waters of the Mediterranean. In a display of masterfully bleak prose from writer Stephen Knight, Mayne informs his troops: "Outstretched hands, cries for help, cries for mama, cries in the name of God, will not slow down your landing craft. Because if you do, our mission will fail." His morbid speech rings true. As the landing craft slowly approach the cape, desperate soldiers cling to driftwood and detritus just yards away, and are reluctantly ignored by the SAS men, jaws clenched, under orders to "show no mercy". Such a dark approach to action and its consequences has enabled much richer storytelling.

> ***"Such a dark approach to action and its consequences has enabled much richer storytelling"***

The cast's performances this season are standout. Jack O'Connell's gruff, yet unexpectedly compassionate Mayne continues to be a highlight, and really comes into his own as we see him, quite ironically, struggle to lead the obscenely ill-disciplined new recruits. Meanwhile, returning fan favourites Eve Mansour (Sofia Boutella) and Dudley Clarke (Dominic West) continue to inject intrigue into the narrative, while additions like Bill Stirling (Gwilym Lee) and John Tonkin (Jack Barton) provide stellar performances.

SAS Rogue Heroes builds on the successful foundations of its first series by delivering a more sombre, intuitive take on the Special Air Service's war. While continuing to depict the gripping exploits of the early SAS by balancing cinematic spectacle with historical authenticity, this season also delves into the psychological toll on its members, and how even the heights of camaraderie and triumph may not be enough to stem its consequences.

SAS Rogues Heroes has secured its position as a modern British TV classic, and I look forward to seeing where the rest of its second series takes us. BW

The first episode of SAS Rogue Heroes season two airs on BBC1 at 9pm on New Year's Day, 2025.

L-R: Jock McDiarmid (Mark Rowley), Johnny Copper (Jacob McCarthy), Reg Seekings (Theo Barklem-Biggs), Anthony Greville-Bell (Stuart Thompson), Dave Kershaw (Bobby Schofield), Pat Riley (Jacob Ifan), Jim Almonds (Corin Silva) and Paddy Mayne (Jack O'Connell). BEHIND: Bill Fraser (Stuart Campbell) and supporting artists
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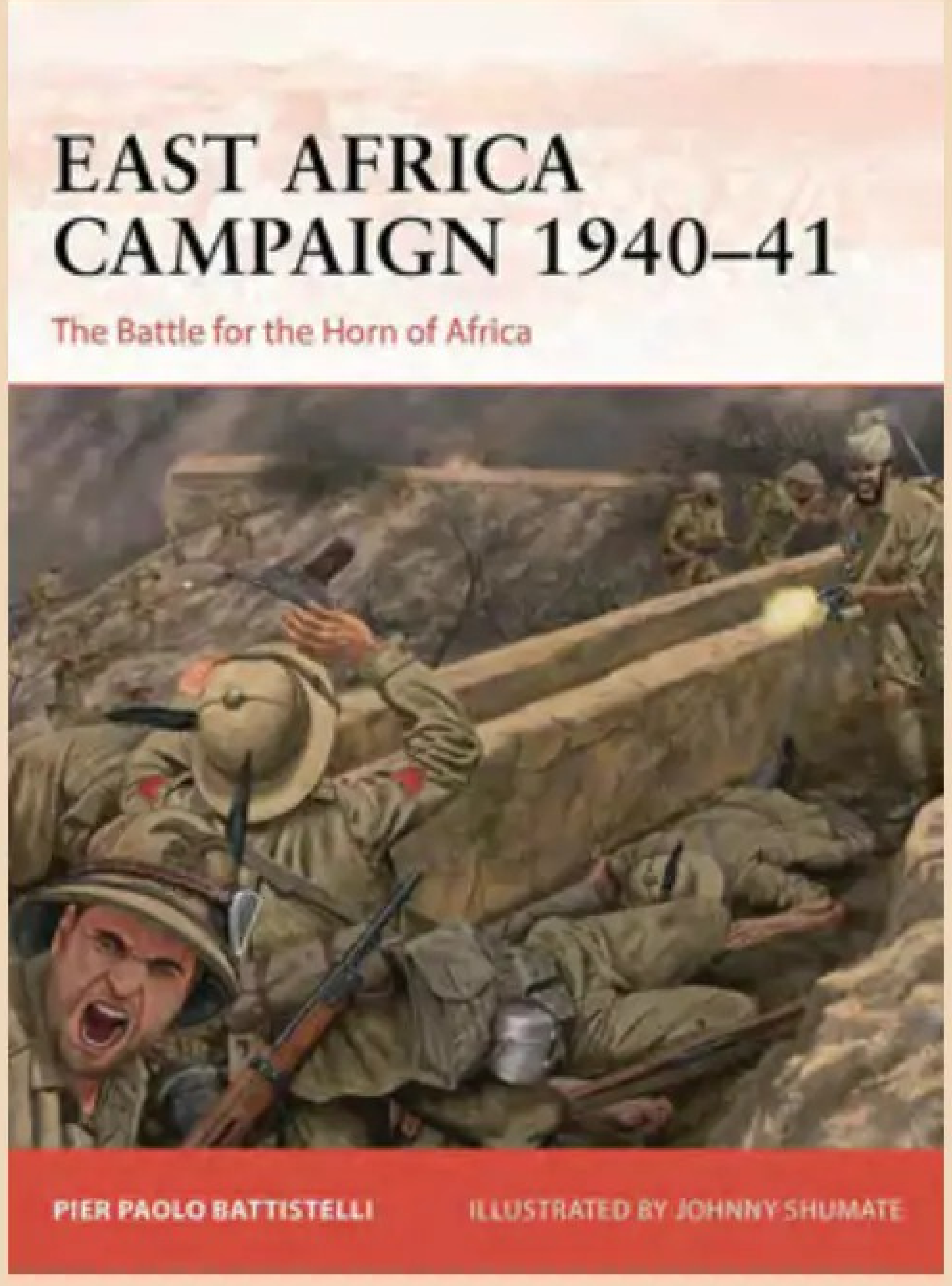
East Africa Campaign 1940-41

The Battle for the Horn of Africa

The Second El Alamein, the Siege of Tobruk, Sidi Rezegh, Operations Compass and Torch... anyone well versed in British military history will be familiar with these names. Since 1945, they have been the focus of numerous academic studies and have appeared in multiple documentaries and films. No wonder then, that where the African Continent in World War Two is concerned, popular knowledge appears to be almost entirely focused on the campaign in the North, particularly Libya, Egypt and Tunisia, meaning pivotal battles such as Tugg Argan, Keren, Amba Alagi and Gondar in East Africa have been overlooked.

Historian Pier Paolo Battistelli has gone some way to righting this oversight with this latest release in the Osprey Publishing *Campaign* series. Spread over eight chapters, Battistelli provides a fresh examination of the East African campaign in 1940 and 1941, providing context and detailing the plans and commanders of the opposing sides. The text charts the campaign from the initial Italian attacks to the Allied counteroffensive into Eritrea, Ethiopia and Italian Somaliland.


EAST AFRICA CAMPAIGN 1940–41
The Battle for the Horn of Africa
PIER PAOLO BATTISTELLI
ILLUSTRATED BY JOHNNY SHUMATE

Attention is given to assessing the combat effectiveness of the forces involved, including Orde Wingate's Gideon Force, Italian and Empire regulars and even pro-Haile Selassie Ethiopian irregulars. Typical of this kind of short book from Osprey, a wealth of fantastic artwork from illustrator Johnny Shumate accompanies the text.

Reviewed by Tom Baker

Author: Pier Paolo Battistelli
Publisher: Osprey Publishing (ospreypublishing.com/uk)
ISBN: 978-1-47286-071-2
Paperback & eBook: 96 pages
RRP: £16.99 (£9.24 eBook)

Camouflaged Fist

Camouflage Smocks used by the Infantry Brigades of the 6th Armoured Division in Italy 1944

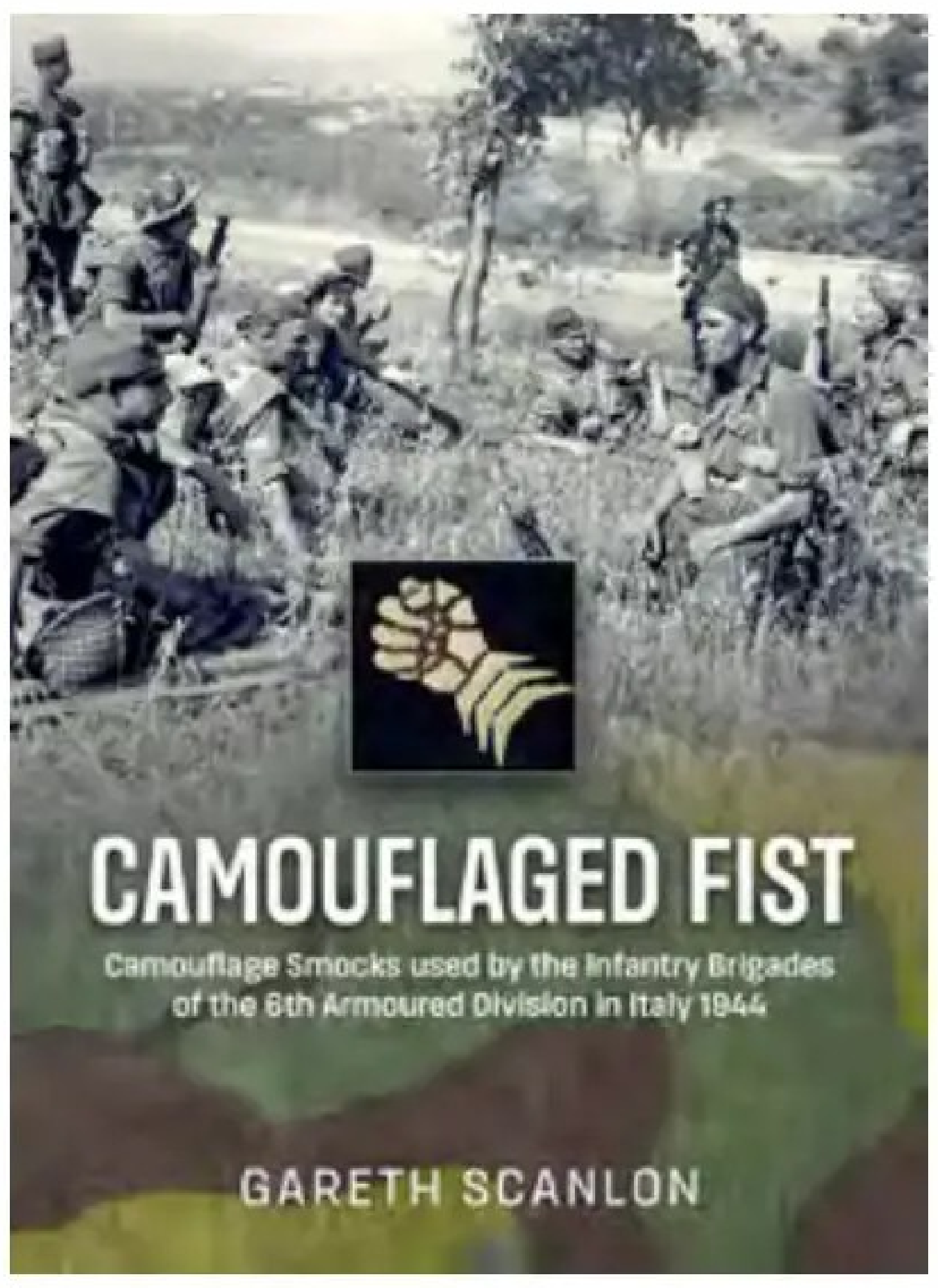
At face value, this study of might not appear to be a subject for everyone, but on closer inspection it is more than worthy of your attention. Here is some quality research, a fantastic presentation of hundreds of original photographs and an intriguing question posed by the author: in Italy during 1944, why were British infantry serving in the 6th Armoured Division wearing *enemy pattern* uniforms?

Author Gareth Scanlon explains how, in early 1944, the Allies seized a large stock of Italian M1929 Telo Mimetico camouflage material. Lacking uniforms suitable for the terrain of Italy, the 6th Armoured Division began producing sleeveless smocks with this captured fabric for its infantry brigades.

Written like an expanded thesis, Scanlon's book goes on to meticulously scrutinise hundreds of available sources, supplemented by firsthand accounts and digitised photographs and documents, to depict the who, what, why, where and when of these curious uniforms. This book provides previously unrevealed insights into the use of British uniforms in Italy and will be of interest to historians, collectors, re-enactors and even scale modellers.

Reviewed by Tom Baker

Author: Gareth Scanlon
Publisher: Helion & Company (helion.co.uk)
ISBN: 978-1-80451-584-6
Paperback: 190 pages
RRP: £29.95


CAMOUFLAGED FIST
Camouflage Smocks used by the Infantry Brigades of the 6th Armoured Division in Italy 1944
GARETH SCANLON

The Great War Ace: The Red Baron and Beyond

The Life and Achievements of Air Marshal Sir Brian Baker KBE, CB, DSO, MC, AFC

Written with the full support of his family, this excellent biography tells the story of a distinguished aviation pioneer and founder member of the RAF. Initially serving in the army as an infantryman, Brian Baker transferred to the RFC in 1915 and began operational flights in France with just 12 hours flying experience! He was one of the lucky few who survived, later serving as a flight commander of the first Bristol Fighter squadron, with which he gained a dozen victories in summer 1917. By the end of the war, he was in command of a Home Defence squadron and opted to remain in the newly formed peacetime RAF. He was initially a flying instructor and later served on aircraft carriers. Rising through the ranks, he held many pivotal posts through World War Two, including a key role in D-Day planning. Post-war he was Commander-in-Chief of RAF Transport Command, a role that included planning the Berlin Airlift.

The Life and Achievements of
AIR MARSHAL SIR
BRIAN BAKER
The GREAT WAR ACE
THE RED BARON and BEYOND
JACQUIE BUTTRISS
FOREWORD BY NIGEL BUTLER

Crisply written with the benefit of access to a huge archive of family papers and personal letters, this is a well-crafted story of a true servant to both his service and country.

Reviewed by Andrew Thomas

Author: Jacquie Buttriss
Publisher: Pen & Sword Aviation (pen-and-sword.co.uk)
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RRP: £25 (£14.99 eBook)

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The US Navy has nuclear ballistic submarines permanently deployed in the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, the UK is known to have at least one ballistic vessel at sea armed with nuclear warheads, while the Russians claim to have as many as five boats deployed at any one time.

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BRITAIN'S SECOND *DREADNOUGHT* REVOLUTION

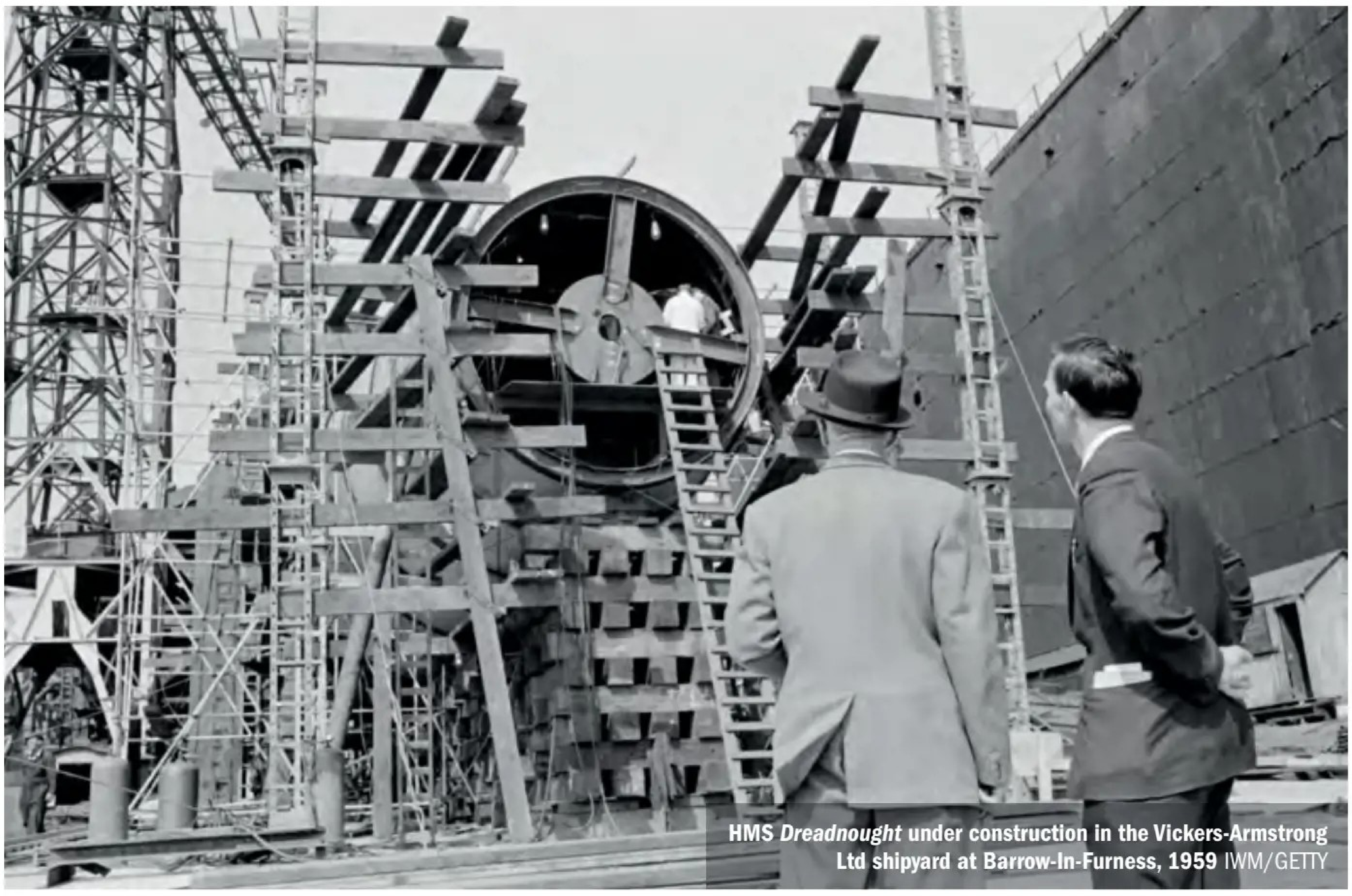
Her launch heralded the start of the Royal Navy's nuclear age and a pioneering leap in the proud endeavours of the Submarine Service. **Michael E Haskew** profiles the unique Cold War vessel that steered the British toward a path of underwater dominance

With the end of World War Two, the Royal Navy had already begun research and development in nuclear power, both with civilian and military applications. This programme was not only to provide alternatives for energy production but with the realities of the Cold War a deterrent to the burgeoning threat of nuclear confrontation with the Soviet Union.

Therefore, though the United Kingdom was some years behind its ally the United States in nuclear weapons development, the Admiralty concluded that its own nuclear-powered submarine was a necessity given the prospects for future military operations. After much discussion and labour, HMS *Dreadnought*, bearing an illustrious name in the history of the Royal Navy and the ninth vessel to do so, was launched by Queen Elizabeth II on Trafalgar Day 1960 and commissioned into Royal Navy service in April 1963.

Although original testing had been undertaken in 1946, the Royal Navy nuclear propulsion programme was terminated due to underfunding and other circumstances in autumn 1952. The evolution of *Dreadnought*, the Royal Navy's first entry into the realm of the "hunter-killer" nuclear submarine, was revived with the startling performance of the US Navy's *Nautilus*, the first nuclear-powered submarine in the world and which became operational in 1958. During joint exercises with Royal Navy surface assets employing the latest in anti-submarine warfare technology, USS *Nautilus* had demonstrated the incredible potential of the nuclear-powered hunter-killer vividly. Chief among the proponents for the renewed Royal Navy undertaking were First Sea Lord Admiral The Earl Mountbatten and Admiral Sir Wilfred Woods, Royal Navy Flag Officer Submarines.

While Britain was already stocked with an arsenal of nuclear bombs that were deliverable via the V-bomber aircraft, there was no doubt



HMS *Dreadnought* under construction in the Vickers-Armstrong Ltd shipyard at Barrow-In-Furness, 1959 IWM/GETTY

HMS *Dreadnought*, Britain's first nuclear submarine, under way in 1963 SSPL/GETTY

The beginning of a new chapter in the Royal Navy's story; the launch of *Dreadnought* by Queen Elizabeth II. October 21, 1960 PA/TOPFOTO

that the naval aspect of an effective and comprehensive nuclear deterrence capability should be further explored. While nuclear-powered submarines armed with nuclear missiles would start to arrive at the end of the decade, with the Resolution-class ballistic missile submarines, the Royal Navy's 61-year (and counting) dalliance with nuclear-powered submarines had to start somewhere, and it began with the hunter-killer.

Dreadnought and her attack submarine successors offered the positive attributes of concealment, movement, longevity of deployment and the ability to eliminate an opposing threat. However, in terms of the Soviet adversary, the technology presented an equally sobering and emergent threat. In short, the hunter-killer concept was embedded in the offensive capability of destroying enemy nuclear submarines with torpedoes before the enemy could do likewise. Such action might be conducted against an adversarial hunter-killer boat or a ballistic missile submarine that carried ICBMs with exponential destructive capacity if launched.

"Today the underwater ship confronts this country with a menace greater than ever before," stated a commentary in the October 12, 1960, issue of *The Engineer*. "Nuclear-power plants have transformed her into a vessel which will remain permanently submerged while at sea and will operate as long as desired with the speed of a fast surface ship. No longer need she surface to concentrate with others of her kind to make a concentrated attack… It must be emphasised that the anti-submarine submarine is the most effective means of profiting from the now greatly increased range of ASDICs [sonar systems]."

Purposeful propulsion

Early in the development of HMS *Dreadnought* it was acknowledged that the debut of an all-British nuclear propulsion system would require many years of research and experimentation along with considerable capital. Therefore, an agreement was reached through the US-UK Mutual Defence Agreement of 1958 to introduce American technology into the equation.

The US was far ahead in the application of nuclear propulsion in warships, and by autumn 1960 no fewer than 56 US Navy vessels were thus powered, including 53 submarines. Rear Admiral Hyman Rickover, head of the US Navy nuclear power programme, at first objected to the sharing of

The 1954-launched USS *Nautilus*, shown during sea trials, was the world's first operational nuclear-powered submarine. Today she is a museum ship in Connecticut US NAVY

The ST *Roa* escorts *Dreadnought* through the Devonshire Dock, Barrow-in-Furness, ahead of her sea trials. November 7, 1962 PA/TOPFOTO

classified nuclear propulsion technology. However, he visited the UK in 1956 and relented afterward while the close relationship between US Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Arleigh Burke and Earl Mountbatten helped to move the exchange of information along.

By the early 1950s, a third-generation S3W nuclear reactor system such as utilised with the submarine USS *Skate* was available, and at first Rickover consented only to its technological transfer. However, further discussion led to the successful employment of the fifth-generation SW5 reactor as utilised with the later Skipjack-class.

Dreadnought was then laid down at Vickers Ltd Shipbuilding Group at Barrow-in-Furness on June 12, 1959. Even as construction began, Rolls-Royce was working in concert with the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority at the Admiralty Research Station, HMS *Vulcan*, in Dounreay, to develop a sole-authored British nuclear propulsion system. An order for the second Royal Navy nuclear-powered submarine, HMS *Valiant*, lead ship of her class of two, was issued on August 31, 1960, to be driven by the Rolls-Royce PWR1 powerplant as the first all-British vessel of its kind. The Valiant-class entered service in the mid-1960s and remained active until 1994.

An American sector

Meanwhile, the transfer of nuclear propulsion technology was made via contract between Westinghouse Electric Corporation and Rolls-Royce as construction of *Dreadnought* proceeded. Rolls-Royce established a facility to manufacture pressurised water reactor cores that drove a single shaft through steam turbines. "Almost every electrical and mechanical part of the propulsion machinery is installed in duplicate so as to minimise the inconvenience of breakdowns," claimed a contemporary engineer's report on the progress of *Dreadnought*'s construction. "In addition, every control feature of the powerplant and of the ship has been duplicated. These innovations will ensure an extremely high standard of reliability which, combined with the need to refuel at only very long intervals, will give her the ability like other nuclear submarines to undertake patrols of particularly long endurance at continuous high underwater speeds."

While the hull and combat systems were designed and built by British contractors, further influence in the submarine's hull design was apparent as the teardrop, bow to stern elliptical configuration of USS *Skipjack* weighed in on *Dreadnought*'s blueprint. The submarine's aft area has sometimes been referred to as its "American Sector".

In fact, historians have since concluded that *Dreadnought*, in its entirety, was an amalgam of US and UK scientific design and application. The engineer's report on her construction related: "From about amidships aft, the hull lines will closely resemble the *Skipjack* so as to accommodate the propulsion machinery. The forward end of the ship is wholly British in concept. In the control room and the attack centre the instruments are fitted into consoles. She will be fitted with an inertial navigation system and with means of measuring her depth below ice."

Dreadnought was further equipped with automated

The US Navy's influential Skipjack-class submarines were the fastest submarines in the world until 1974 and shared the reactor design as well as the form of the aft section with *Dreadnought* US DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE navigation capabilities that were touted as "invulnerable to detection or jamming and independent of ground-based aids". The finished hunter-killer was described as complete with British design of structural strength and hydrodynamic features in the hull, with a nod to the "pioneering" work 'borrowed' from the US Navy.

Compared with prior Royal Navy submarine designs, *Dreadnought* was quite large, displacing 3,500 tons surfaced and 4,000 tons submerged, making her the largest British submarine in decades – in fact the largest since the interwar HMS X1. *Dreadnought* was 265ft 8½in long with a beam of 31ft 2¼in and draft of 25ft 10¾in, slightly shorter than the contemporary Oberon-class, British-built diesel attack submarines. However, there was one more internal deck aboard *Dreadnought*, which made a significant difference in the spacious feel of the new nuclear-powered type. Electricity was produced in the American Sector with astounding efficiency at one penny per kilowatt hour, while potable water was made available there at the modest cost of seven-and-a-half pence per gallon. Even accounting for inflation and decimalisation, we can only dream today of such prices in an age of soaring costs!

Launch and learn

Dreadnought was launched with great ceremony at Barrow-in-Furness on Trafalgar Day 1960. Preliminary evaluations were undertaken in early 1962 and proceeded with good results given the relative inexperience of the British nuclear submarine programme in every aspect. The nuclear reactor was installed on July 8, 1962, and reached critical mass that November, followed by sea trials in the Irish Sea in December. The submarine's first dive was accomplished in Ramsden Dock on January 10, 1963, and commissioning was concluded on April 17 that year.

***Dreadnought* alongside at Barrow** KEYSTONE/GETTY

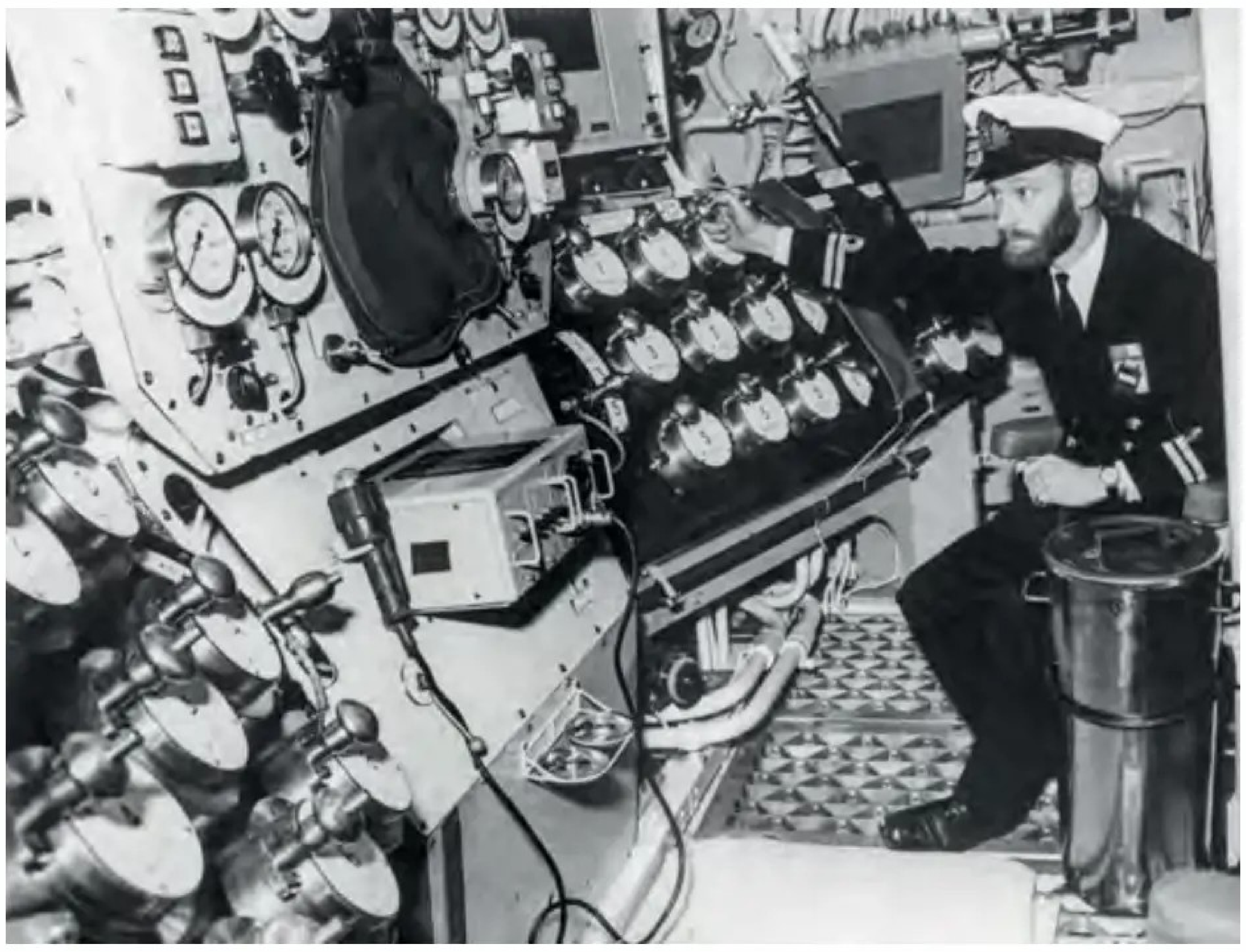
At the time, *Dreadnought* was among the most advanced weapons systems in the world. The submarine was steered and handled by means of telemotor controls with a joystick and extensive instrument console similar to that of a sophisticated aircraft. An autopilot function was active, and the submarine indeed performed, while submerged, in similar fashion to a modern jet aircraft.

She was armed with six bow tubes that launched 21in Mark 20C 'Bidder' battery-powered torpedoes that packed 196lb Torpex warheads and active/passive homing capability. The 20C was a 1960s submarine derivative of the original (and short-lived) 1955-introduced Bidder design intended for launch from surface ships. *Dreadnought* carried 24 of the weapons and they indeed constituted a potent killing machine for the time with a range of 7,000 yards when running at 23kts. A wire-guided version of the Mark 20C, the Mark 23 Grog, was also available. The submarine was equipped with the latest Type 1002 radar and Type 2001 sonar.

Dreadnought's performance capabilities were officially classified, but the engineer's report could not resist a bit of boasting. A nod to *Skipjack*'s handling and control influence was followed by

***Dreadnought* during a visit to Southampton, May 1965** PA/ALAMY

Dreadnought's first captain, Commander Barnaby Samborne, on the bridge. He prepared for his new command with an exchange posting on USS *Skipjack* CORBIS/GETTY



Dreadnought's control panel for the operation of her torpedo tubes KEYSTONE/GETTY

the statement: "The *Skipjack* is unofficially credited with a submerged speed of over 40kts. This means she literally flies through the water." The allusion to *Dreadnought's* prowess was obvious. Officially, speed was listed at 20kts surfaced and 28kts submerged, but perhaps her captains also marvelled at her potential short bursts of increased pace?

Nuclear propulsion, state-of-the-art navigation and speed aside, *Dreadnought* really was something of a marvel, not only a fighting machine but also home to 113 officers and ratings. Creature comforts were naturally constrained due to available space, but there were showers and laundry facilities, separate mess spaces for officers and ratings and a large cafeteria-style galley where fresh meals were prepared. Common areas and living quarters were spared no reasonable embellishment – as far as submarines go – including theatre equipment for film screenings, tape recorders and players to enable crewmen to listen to their favourite music off hours, and a library liberally stocked with paperbacks. Crewmen who had served in earlier Royal Navy boats were amazed at the perceived luxury.

Air conditioning was installed along with purification apparatus for air quality aboard the submarine, and *Dreadnought* was capable of operating for more than two months without surfacing to replenish air from the outside. Remarkably, a pint of distilled seawater per hour was passed through electrolyser equipment and produced enough oxygen for the crew. In the end, *Dreadnought's* maximum range was unlimited – only her capacity to store food and feed the complement for 60 days, as well as the limits of human endurance, restricted the maxmium length of a single-mission deployment.

In service

Dreadnought remained in Royal Navy service until 1980. During

DREADNOUGHT VS CONTEMPORARY EARLY NUCLEAR-POWERED 'HUNTER-KILLER' ATTACK SUBMARINES

	DREADNOUGHT	VALIANT-CLASS	SKIPJACK-CLASS	PERMIT-CLASS	(PROJECT 627) NOVEMBER-CLASS
Country:	Britain	Britain	United States	United States	Soviet Union
In Service:	1963-80	1966-94	1959-90	1961-96	1959-90
Displacement:	3,500 tons (surfaced)/4,000 tons (submerged)	4,400 tons (surfaced)/4,900 tons (submerged	3,125 tons (surfaced)/3,570 tons (submerged)	3,800 tons (surfaced)/4,370 tons (submerged)	3,065 tons (surfaced)/4,750 tons (submerged)
Length:	265ft 8in (81m)	285ft (87m)	251ft 8in (76.7m)	278ft 5in (85m)	352ft (107.5m)
Reactor/propulsion:	Westinghouse S5W reactor, one shaft (15,000shp)	Rolls-Royce PWR1 Core A reactor, one shaft (15,000shp)	Westinghouse S5W reactor, one shaft (15,000shp)	Westinghouse S5W reactor, one shaft (15,000shp)	Two VM-A reactors, two shafts (35,000shp)
Listed max speed:	20kts surfaced, 28kts submerged	20kts surfaced, 29kts submerged	15kts surfaced, 33kts submerged	15kts surfaced, 28kts submerged	15kts surfaced, 30kts submerged
Crew:	113	116	93	112	105
Armament:	6 x 21in bow tubes, 24 Mk.20C torpedoes	6 x 21in bow tubes, up to 32 Mk.VIII/Tigerfish torpedoes, 64 mines and/or six UGM-84B Harpoon AS missiles	6 x 21in bow tubes, 24 Mk.14, Mk.16, Mk37 or Mk.48 torpedoes, and/or Mk.45 ASTOR nuclear torpedoes	4 x 21in bow tubes, 18 Mk.37, Mk.48 torpedoes and up to six UUM-44 SUBROC ASW missiles or UGM-84 Harpoon AS missiles	8 x 21in bow tubes, 20 SET-65, 53-65K torpedoes
Number built:	1	2	6	14	14

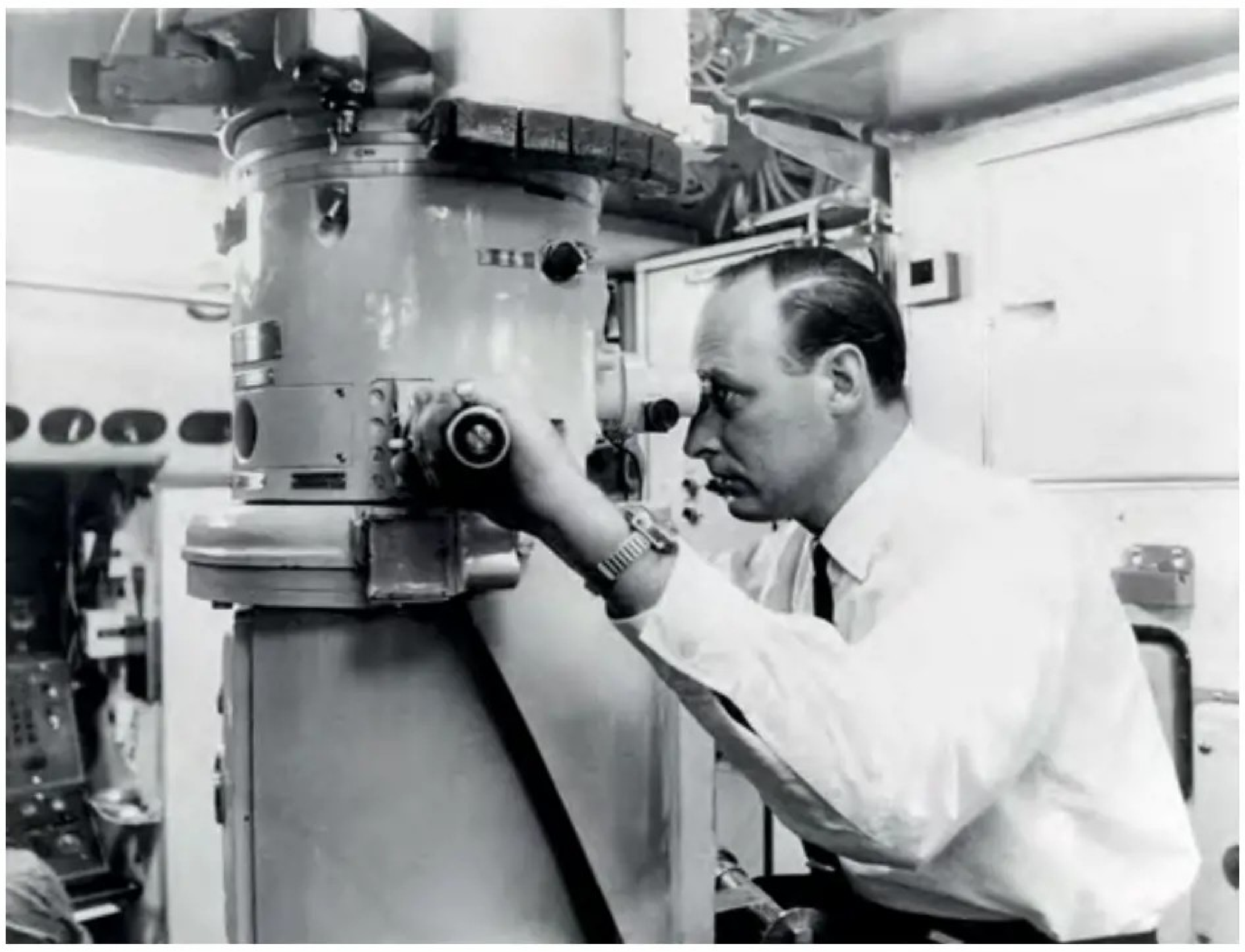
that time, her contribution to preserving nuclear deterrence, international military co-operation and showing the British flag around the world was substantial. Some of her activities and deployments were classified and remain so today.

Extensive crew training and preparation were undertaken through 1964, and early port calls included Norfolk, Virginia, Bermuda, Rotterdam, Netherlands, and Kiel, Germany – to participate in Kiel Week, one of the world's largest nautical-related events for more than a century. In October that year, she participated in joint naval manoeuvres with the US and Royal Canadian navies around Scotland. These exercises were conducted under the watchful eyes of three warships and three submarines of the Soviet Navy.

From 1965 to 1967, *Dreadnought* made three visits to Gibraltar, and in November deployed from Rosyth for Singapore, establishing a Royal Navy record for a high-speed run that included 4,640 miles on the surface and 26,545 miles submerged.

On June 21, 1967, *Dreadnought* was docked at Gibraltar when duty officer Lieutenant Higgins received a telephone call from the operations staff of Flag Officer Gibraltar. The question was posed: "How quickly can *Dreadnought* put to sea?" Although some of the saltwater pumps that kept the nuclear reactor cool were not functioning properly and the main bow radar was under repair, the response was "24 hours". Crewmen were recalled or rounded up from shore leave to make ready. The reactor went critical in 12 hours, while other preparations for sea were completed.

The mission was to remove a seaborne hazard created when the German tanker *Essberger Chemist* had broken in half in the turbulent Atlantic south of the Azores. The drifting remnants were a hazard to shipping and threatened to drift toward land. *Dreadnought* sailed on June 22, covering 1,000 miles to begin its search for the dangerous half-ship near the point it had last been observed. She circled the 280ft hulk, which was loaded with acetone and alcohol, and turned toward optimal range and position to launch a spread of four torpedoes from her bow tubes.

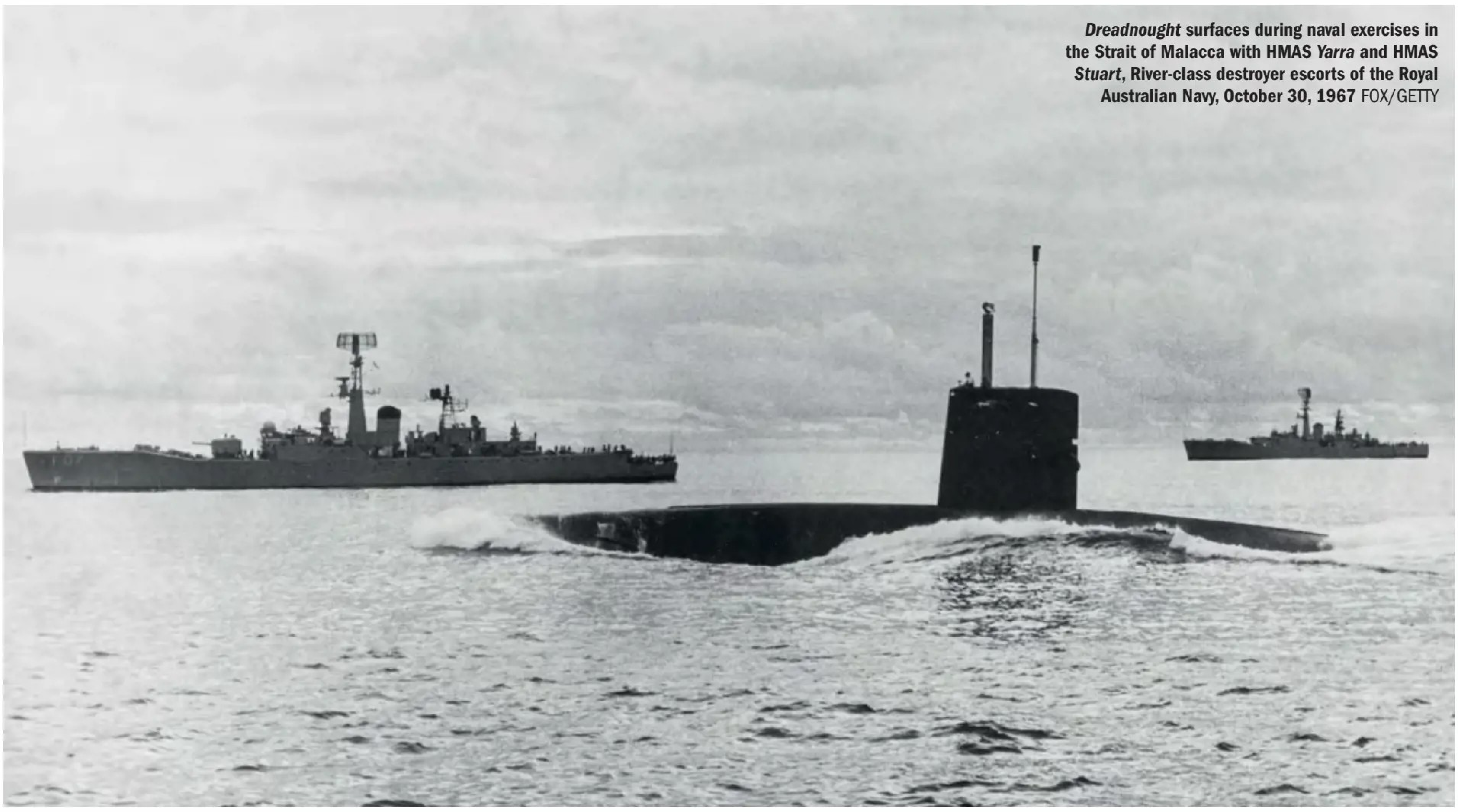


Commander Samborne scans the sea through the *Dreadnought*'s periscope KEYSTONE/GETTY

> *"Dreadnought's maximum range was limited only by her capacity to store food and feed the complement for 60 days"*

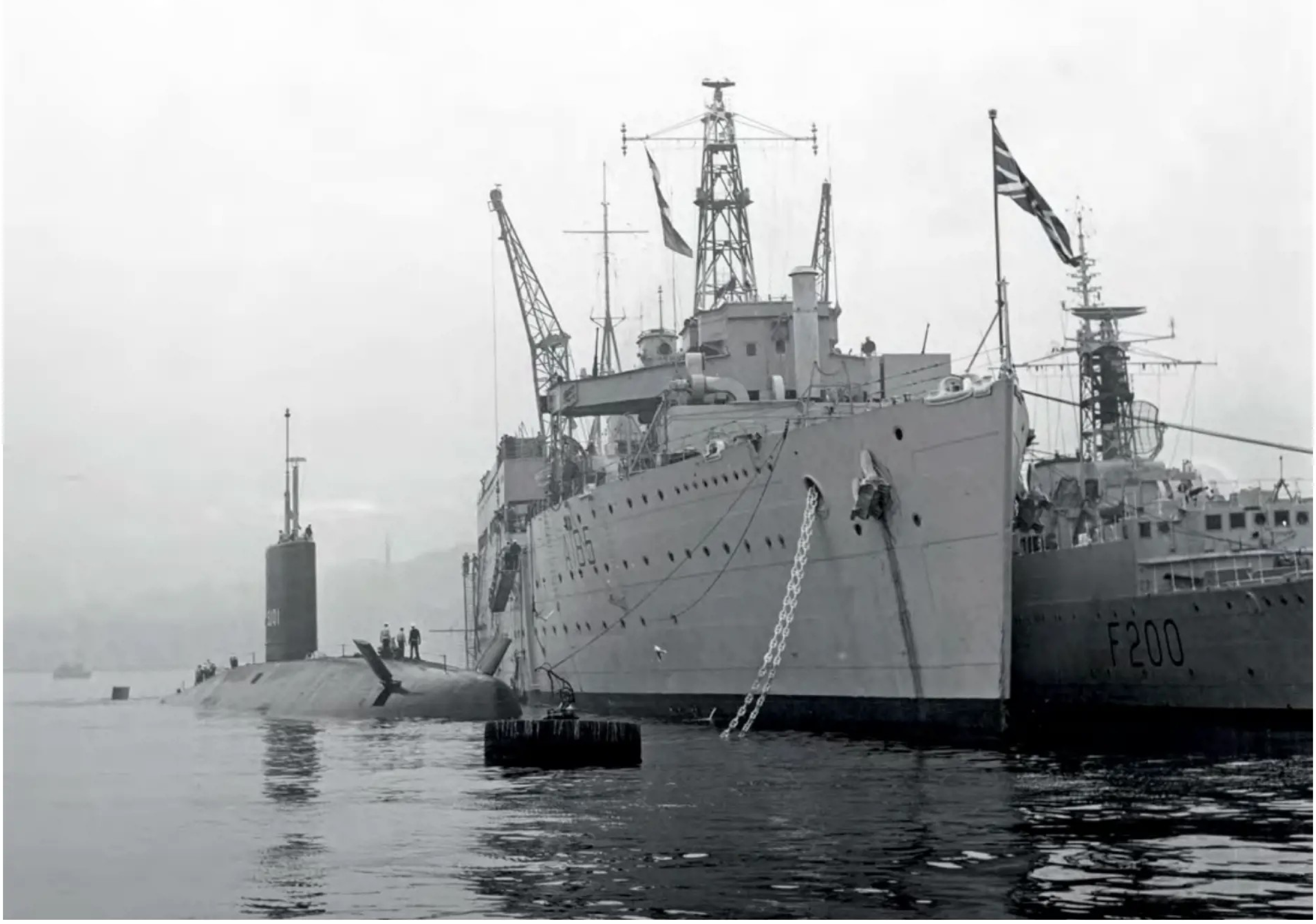
Three of the four weapons struck home, but the target refused to sink. *Dreadnought* surfaced, and the captain radioed the nearby Type 61 frigate HMS *Salisbury* to practice its gunnery and turn her twin 4.5in main guns against the ship. After several rounds were expended, a tremendous explosion signalled the demise of the *Essberger Chemist*.

The performance of *Dreadnought*'s crew had demonstrated readiness and deployment capability worthy of praise. Reports related: "From Captain S/M, Third Submarine Squadron… I have much pleasure in forwarding HMS *Dreadnought*'s report of the sinking of the *Essberger Chemist* immediately on receipt, since I believe you may wish to make some



Dreadnought **surfaces during naval exercises in the Strait of Malacca with HMAS *Yarra* and HMAS *Stuart*, River-class destroyer escorts of the Royal Australian Navy, October 30, 1967** FOX/GETTY

Dreadnought alongside the submarine depot ship HMS _Maidstone_ and the Type 15 frigate HMS _Ursa_, 1964 ROYAL NAVY



early commendation to the CO and Ship's Company on this timely and well executed operation."

The Flag Officer Submarines relayed: "The operation was well conducted, exemplified the transition of a fleet submarine from a maintenance period in dock to full war readiness in 12 hours."

The following February, *Dreadnought* visited Kiel again, and the owner of *Essberger Chemist* expressed appreciation for the service rendered with the presentation of a silver gilt goblet and an offer to entertain 20 crewmen with a "free run ashore" when the submarine returned to the UK.

During her active service, *Dreadnought* proved to be reliable and was a popular station with her crews. Only minor hull cracking was discovered with routine inspections, and when the submarine completed her first major refit at Rosyth in September 1970, the nuclear core was replenished, and ballast tank valves were replaced to reduce operational noise. Early in 1971, *Dreadnought* became the first British nuclear submarine to surface at the North Pole while participating in Arctic naval exercises codenamed Operation Sniff. Minor damage to the bow, fins and propeller were sustained, but did not interfere with performance.

"*Dreadnought* became the first British nuclear submarine to surface at the North Pole"

Two years later, *Dreadnought* was a centrepiece of the Royal Navy's first annual Group Deployment, participating in further fleet exercises and making goodwill stops during an extensive peacetime cruise. In November 1977, an eight-month deployment to Australia was cancelled as the threat of Argentine action in the Falklands emerged. *Dreadnought* was routed to Gibraltar and then to the South Atlantic in company with the frigates *Phoebe* and *Alacrity*, undertaking Operation Journeyman, to successfully deter the Argentine government from any rash act that might necessitate a British military response. Further surveillance activities were also completed.

By 1980, age and the lack of available repair facilities for nuclear submarine refits led to the decommissioning of *Dreadnought*, one of the most historic vessels of the Royal Navy's modern era. Although there were no immediate plans to scrap the submarine, her nuclear fuel was safely removed and the vessel was placed in long-term storage at Rosyth pending disposal through the Ministry of Defence Submarine Dismantling Project. She remains there today, while her more modern successors begin their dismantlement.

However, a 2012 periodic hull inspection raised the prospect of preservation. Perhaps in the future HMS *Dreadnought* will be open to tours and to assist in the full appreciation of the service and dedication of those who manned the Royal Navy's historic submarine during 17 years of active duty. At this time, the name *Dreadnought* is scheduled to live on in the latest class of Royal Navy ballistic missile submarines, set to replace the Vanguard-class in the coming years. BW

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GOING UNDERGROUND

As well as keeping the capital moving, London Transport provided shelter to civilians, companies and officials during World War Two – and helped to win the war in its factories

By Austin J Ruddy

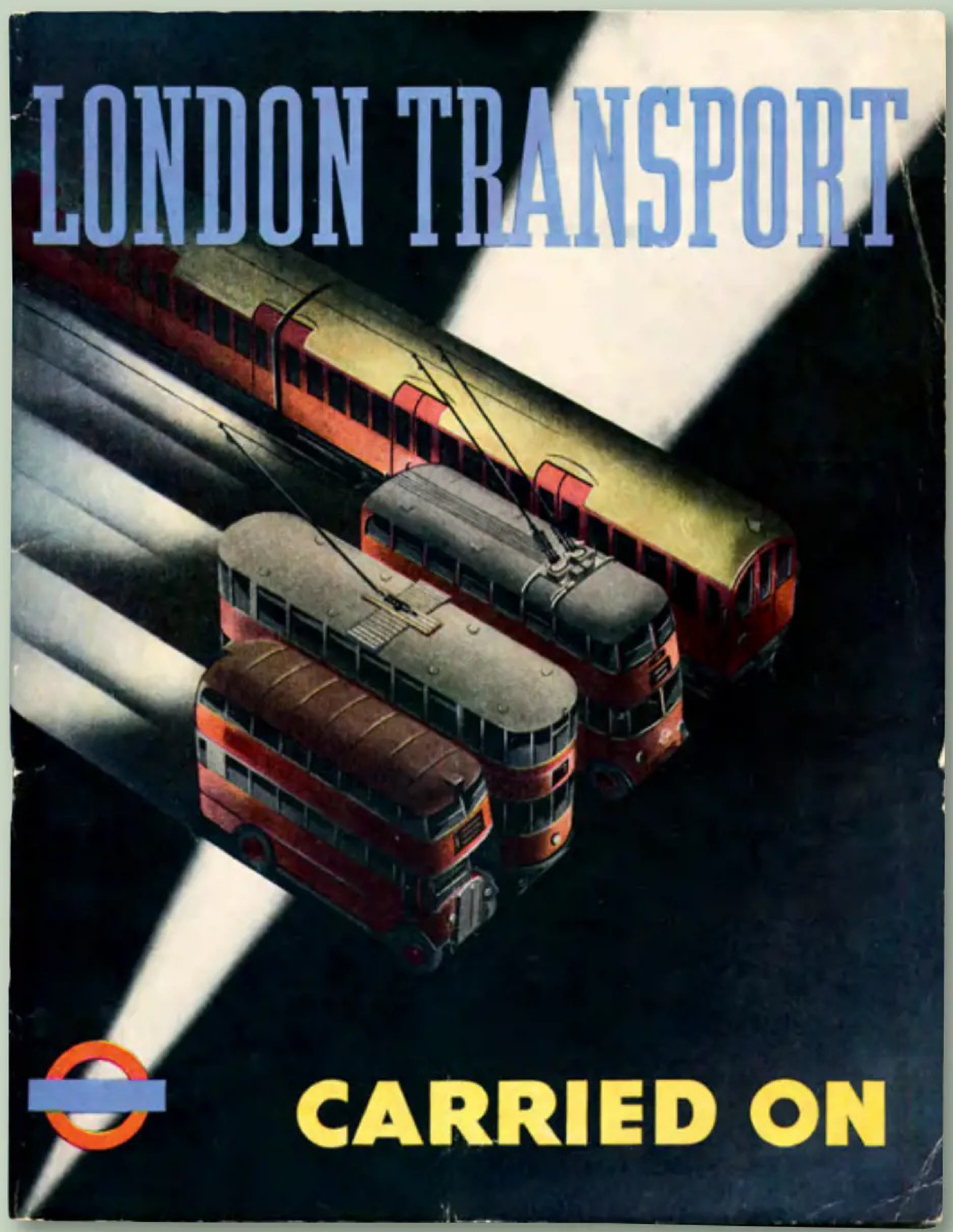
When the London Underground first opened in 1863, little could its architects have realised that aside from transporting billions of passengers, their new subterranean network would also go on to save countless lives. In 1940, and under a wave of public pressure, the government reluctantly threw open the gates of the Underground to thousands sheltering from the Blitz.

In 1933, the capital's underground railway, bus and trolleybus services had been merged into a fully integrated network under the banner of the London Passenger Transport Board. By the outbreak of war, the city's transport system was immense – essentially a city within a city – with thousands of staff helping move millions.

It's a primeval human instinct to take cover underground from overwhelming threats. So when Luftwaffe aircaft sporadically started to target the capital in summer 1940, some Londoners bought tickets for the Underground and refused to leave. As the raids increased, so did the number of unofficial subterranean shelterers.

Practical, it may have been, but it caused concern at government level. The stations had only been designed for waiting a few minutes for a train, not resting hours overnight. Officially, the concern stated was that children would fall on the rails, but there was a more confidential concern: morale. It was feared shelterers would turn troglodyte, never coming to the surface, and that war production would suffer. Letters to the newspapers labelled them 'shelter rats' for not helping above ground during air raids. Shelterers responded that they were helping by keeping out of the way, avoiding potential casualties and reducing the burden on the stretched emergency services.

Some stations started to lock their entrances each evening to deter shelterers. After increasing left-wing agitation, matters came to a head on September 8, 1940, when large crowds of East Londoners gathered outside Liverpool Street station. After tussles, eventually the locked gates were forced open using crowbars, the police swept aside and crowds surged down to the platforms. Perhaps either realising the Underground actually was a potential mass lifesaver or just facing inevitability, the following day the Minister of Home Security announced the government had relented.



The vital work that the capital's public transport network conducted during the war years was revealed in the excellent booklet *London Transport Carried On*, published by LPTB in 1947. Despite its age, it is still an accurate and detailed account and can be found for £10

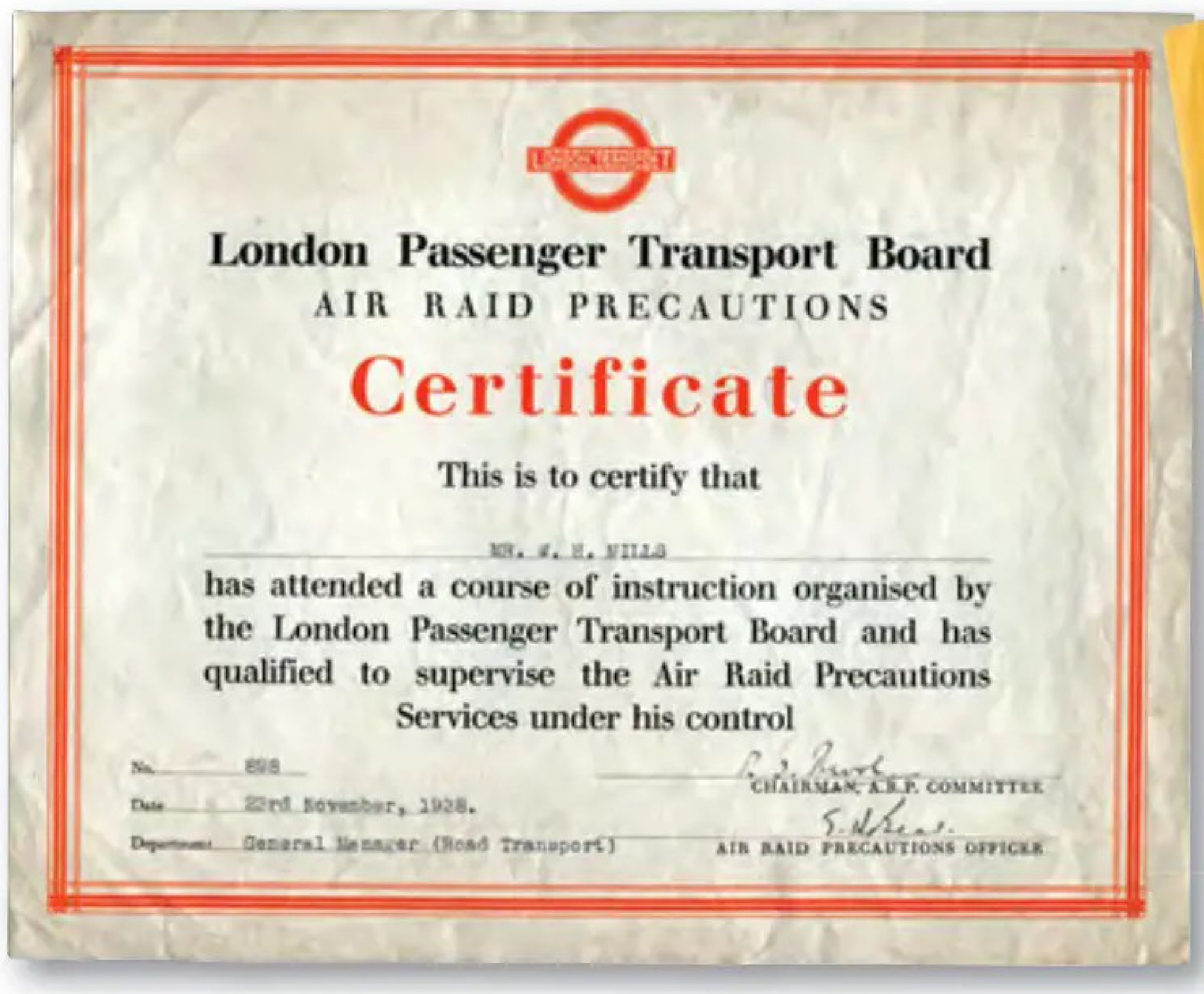
ALL IMAGES VIA AUSTIN J RUDDY UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED

Catering for the masses

In truth, the about turn was not as revolutionary as has been portrayed. Though largely forgotten, during World War One, some 4.25 million Londoners had used the Underground for shelter from July 1917. Indeed, in 1938, a year before war, London Transport had commissioned a survey that suggested some 12.5 miles of unopened tube tunnels could be utilised for such purposes.

Whatever the case, the move proved a success, with 177,000 people sheltering in the Underground on September 27, 1940, alone. A nightly routine developed, with queues forming outside stations from 1700hrs and being admitted at 2000hrs. On November 30, Westminster City Council became the first local authority to issue shelter tickets, with shelterers having to vacate their pitches by 0700hrs to make way for commuters.

It was not the most salubrious or comfortable accommodation, but it was an escape from the horrors above. Each night, whole families, with bedding, suitcases and flasks, huddled



London Passenger Transport Board
AIR RAID PRECAUTIONS
Certificate
This is to certify that
MR. [illegible] H. MILLS
has attended a course of instruction organised by the London Passenger Transport Board and has qualified to supervise the Air Raid Precautions Services under his control

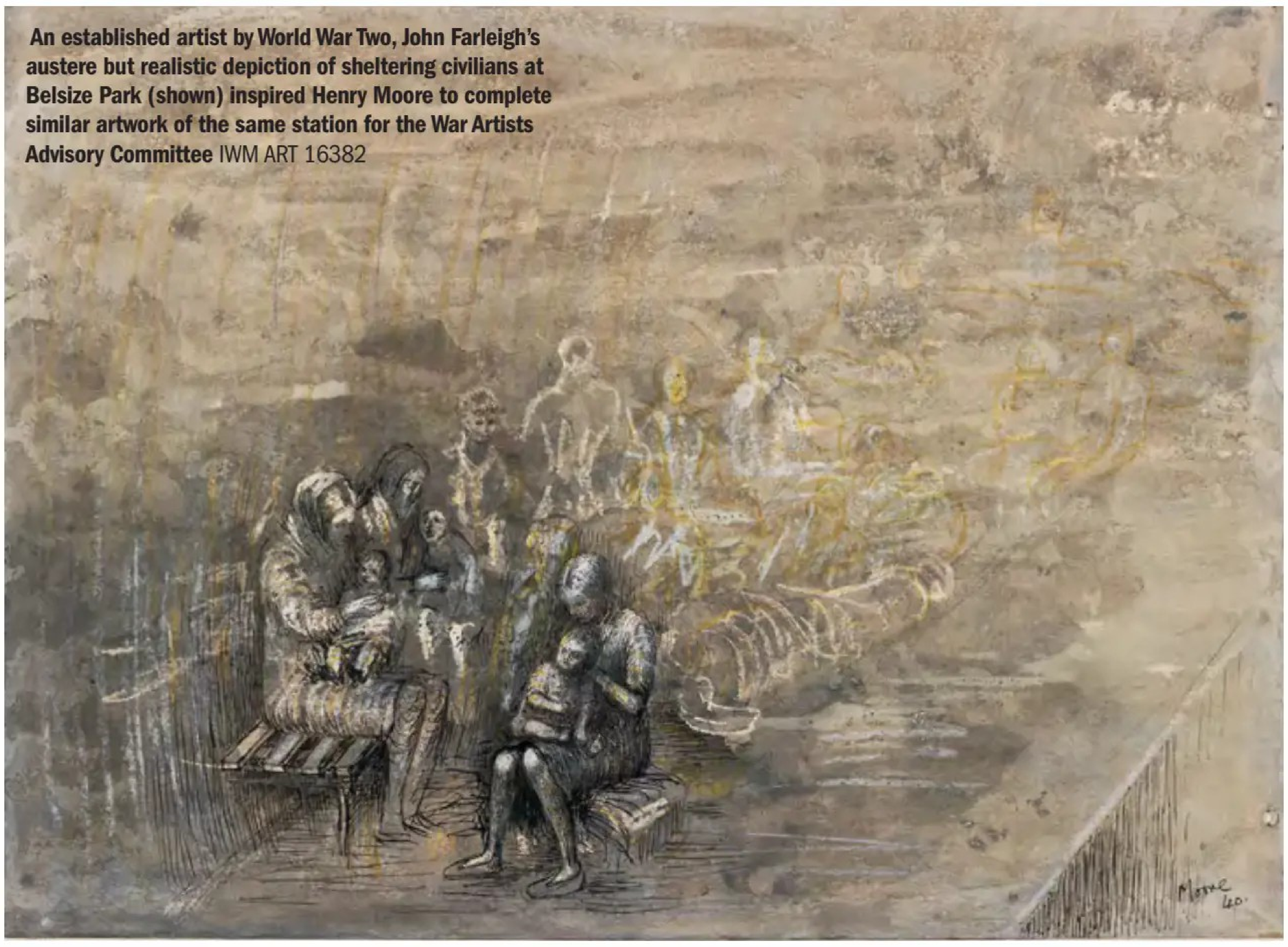
No. 898
Date 23rd November, 1938.
Department General Manager (Road Transport)

CHAIRMAN, A.R.P. COMMITTEE
AIR RAID PRECAUTIONS OFFICER

The network's vulnerability to air attack was realised well before the war and staff were trained in Air Raid Precautions, as this certificate from 1938, testifies. Rare, £55

LONDON TRANSPORT
AIR RAID PRECAUTIONS MANUAL
1938
Mr C Waterhouse
PRIVATE: NOT FOR PUBLICATION.
AIR RAID PRECAUTIONS.
(APPENDIX 2.)
SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS TO OPERATING STAFF
1st February, 1943.
BY ORDER.

The sheer amount of ARP preparations multiplied as the war developed. The first edition of this pre-war 1938 manual (at left) comprised a mere 34 pages but, by 1943, it had increased to 110 pages, covering all sorts of measures, including flood gates, watertight doors and sheltering. Both are rare, around £30 each



An established artist by World War Two, John Farleigh's austere but realistic depiction of sheltering civilians at Belsize Park (shown) inspired Henry Moore to complete similar artwork of the same station for the War Artists Advisory Committee IWM ART 16382

in a jumble along the full length of the platform. Sculptor Henry Moore drew inspiration from this surreal scene with a series of shelter drawings of Belsize Park station. His claustrophobic works capture the slumbering shelterers in strange poses, disturbingly like the ossified bodies at Pompeii. Moore was also inspired by John Farleigh, who was primarily known for his wood engravings and book illustrations. An established artist by World War Two, Farleigh also chose to depict sheltering civilians at Belsize Park in a monochrome, slightly surreal but also realistic scene.

However, this subterranean congregation soon caused issues. Some stations became overcrowded, with latecomers having to sleep on escalators and spivs selling pitches for extortionate fees. There were reports of babies being born – and made – in stations. A report by Lord Horder worried that the poor ventilation and congested conditions could lead to outbreaks of influenza, pneumonia or tuberculosis. Fortunately, this did not occur – mainly due to the liberal use of disinfectant – but many developed 'shelter cough' and occasionally there were swarms of mosquitoes due to the increased heat.

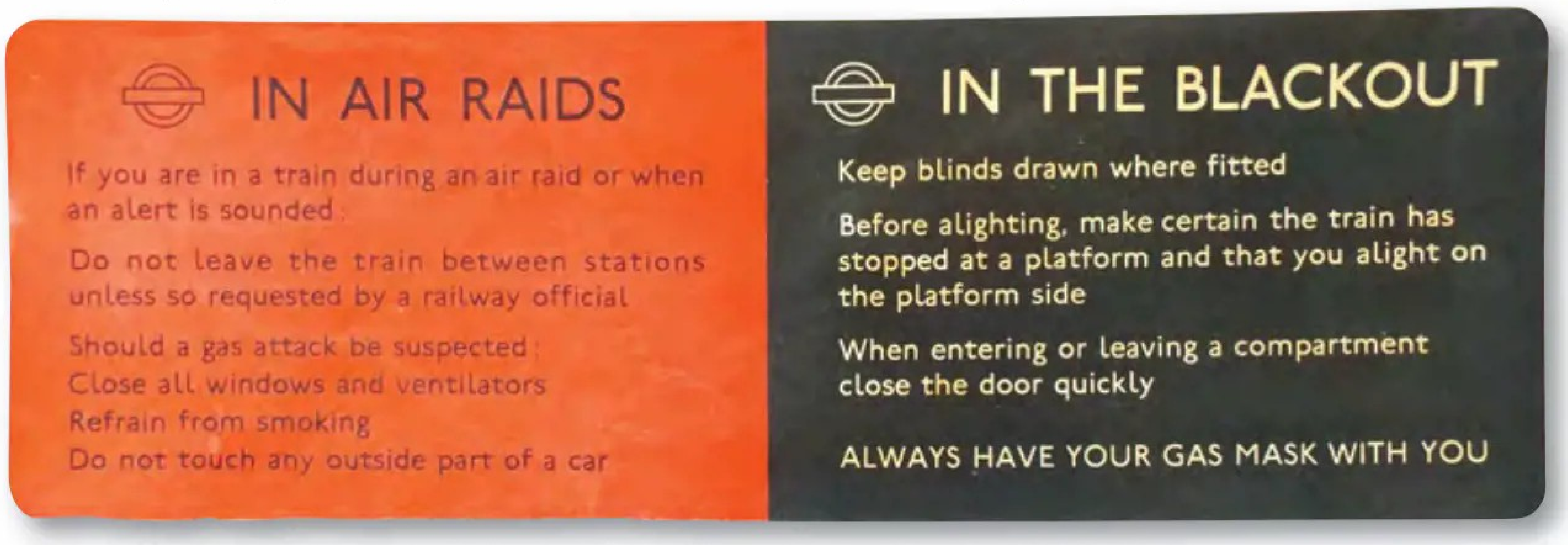
London Transport tackled these issues by introducing platform toilets, medical aid facilities and even libraries, entertainers and Christmas parties. By December 1940, 124 platform canteen points operated at 71 stations, serving hot drinks and snacks to approximately 112,000 people, as did special refreshment trains. In total, shelterers were served 545,454 gallons of tea. Accommodation also improved – from February 1941, three-tier metal bunks were erected on the platforms, eventually numbering 24,000 in total.

> ***"A report worried that the poor ventilation and congested conditions could lead to outbreaks of influenza, pneumonia or tuberculosis"***

Deep level

Despite their apparent sanctuary, not all stations were as safe as they seemed. On October 12, 1940, Trafalgar Square station was struck by a bomb, killing seven shelterers. The following night, 19 died under 200 tonnes of rubble when Bounds Green station was hit. On October 14, Balham station was flooded after a bomb penetrated, killing 64. And, on January 11, 1941, 56 people died when a bomb hit the booking hall at Bank, which was just below the road surface, causing the biggest crater in London. Indeed, there were fatalities at 17 more Underground stations. However, the most tragic incident was not caused by a Luftwaffe bomb, but panic. On March 3, 1943, a stampede down the stairs into Bethnal Green station led to a crush, killing 173 shelterers. Despite these tragedies, the Underground saved countless lives, giving shelter to an estimated 63 million during the war.

The government were aware that the Underground was not the ideal solution for the capital's shelterers, so while the Blitz raged, they commissioned London Transport to build ten deep-level shelters at a depth of 100ft. The project was complicated: construction at the Oval was abandoned due to flooding, while work was halted at St Paul's after complaints the cathedral could be undermined. This left shelters at Belsize Park, Camden Town, Chancery Lane, Goodge Street,



IN AIR RAIDS

If you are in a train during an air raid or when an alert is sounded:

Do not leave the train between stations unless so requested by a railway official

Should a gas attack be suspected:
Close all windows and ventilators
Refrain from smoking
Do not touch any outside part of a car

IN THE BLACKOUT

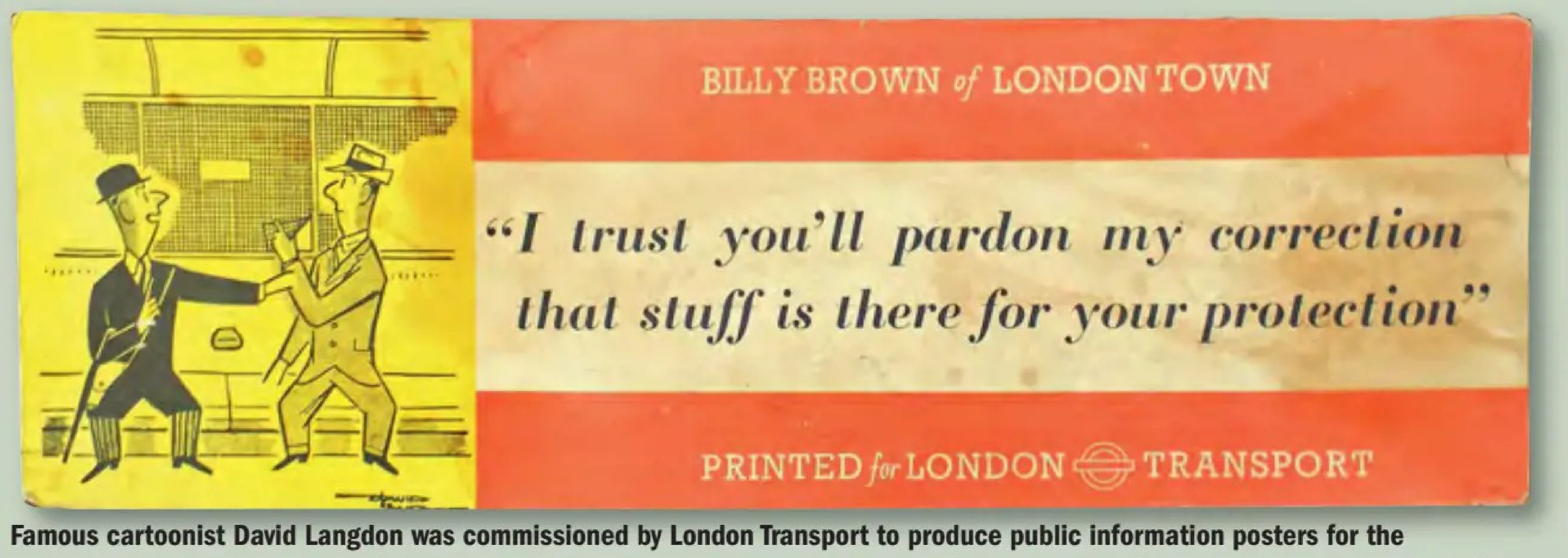
Keep blinds drawn where fitted

Before alighting, make certain the train has stopped at a platform and that you alight on the platform side

When entering or leaving a compartment close the door quickly

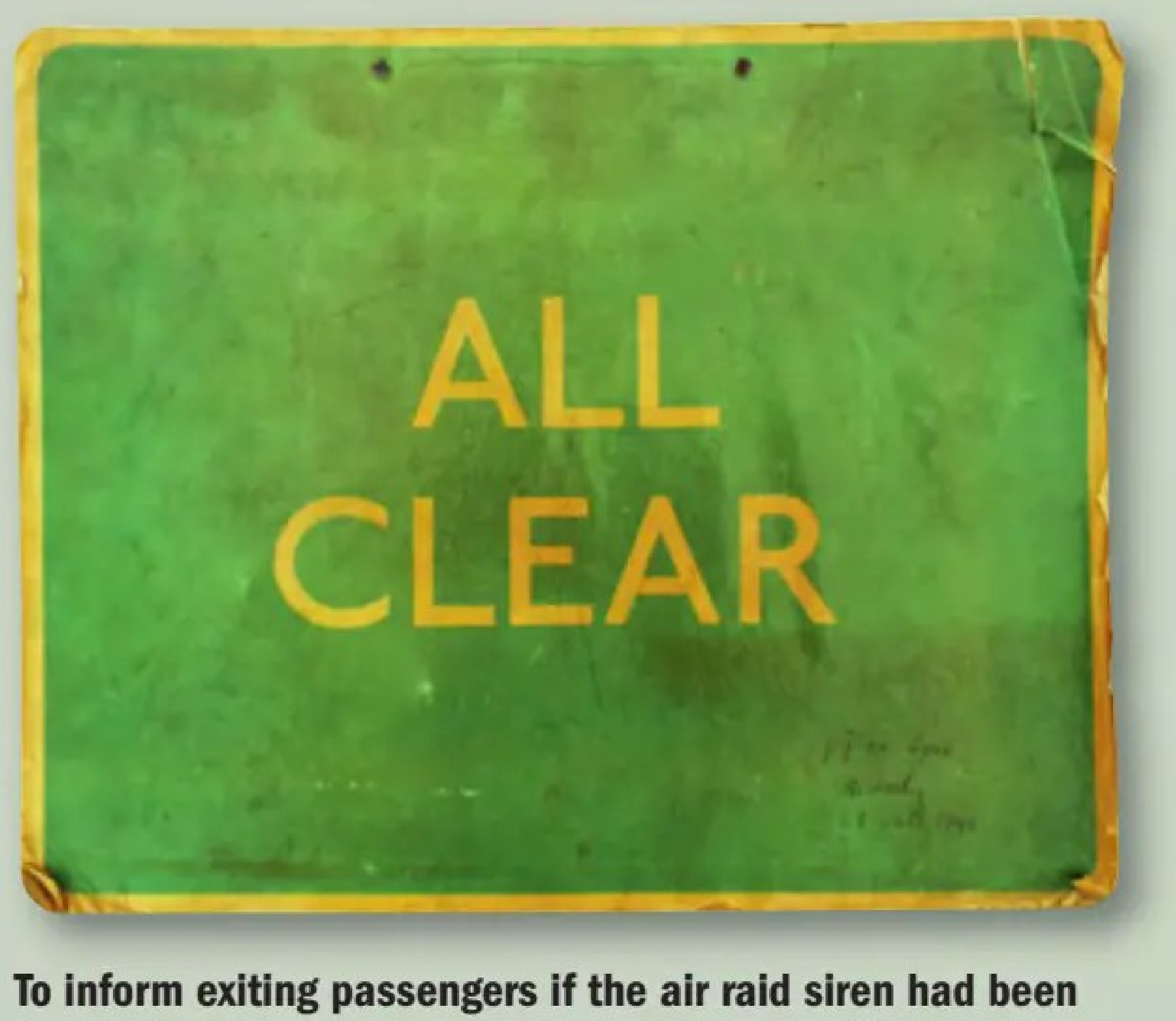
ALWAYS HAVE YOUR GAS MASK WITH YOU

Tube travellers were warned what to do "in air raids" and "in the blackout" on these 24in by 8in information panels posted above the carriage windows. Rare, but watch out for reproductions, £85


BILLY BROWN of LONDON TOWN
"I trust you'll pardon my correction
that stuff is there for your protection"
PRINTED for LONDON TRANSPORT

Famous cartoonist David Langdon was commissioned by London Transport to produce public information posters for the Underground. Langdon created 'Billy Brown of London Town', a smartly dressed city gent who advised travellers how to stay safe via catchy rhyming couplets. It was noted somebody graffitied the reply: "Thank you for your information, but I can't see my bloody station!" Rare, £85

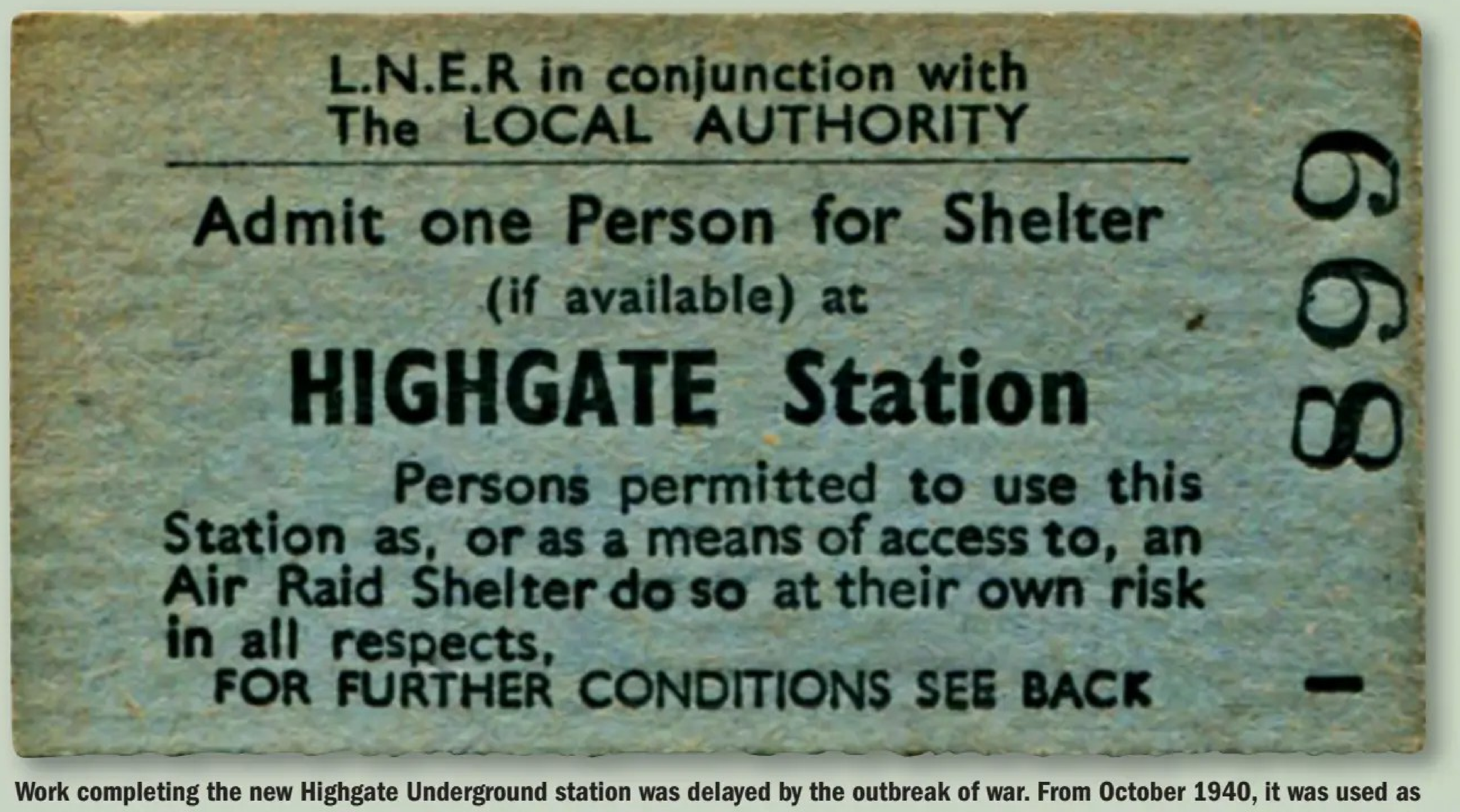
AIR RAID
ALERT
HAS SOUNDED



To inform exiting passengers if the air raid siren had been sounded while they were underground, these 16in by 12in cardboard signs in LPTB font were displayed in stations. Made by Waterlow & Sons, survivors are extremely rare, with one example held in the London Transport Museum Depot archives: £450

Stockwell, Clapham North, Clapham Common and Clapham South. Each accommodated 8,000 shelterers in two 1,300ft parallel tunnels, accessed by spiral staircases, via distinctive reinforced circular entrances. Too late to meet the main Blitz, they were opened during the V-weapon attacks in 1944, providing shelter to Londoners and barracks for US troops. Post-war, in 1948, they accommodated migrants from HMT *Empire Windrush* and, three years later, visitors to the Festival of Britain.

It wasn't only crowds of sheltering civilians that the Underground gave protection to. It also served the war effort for more secret uses. Disused Down



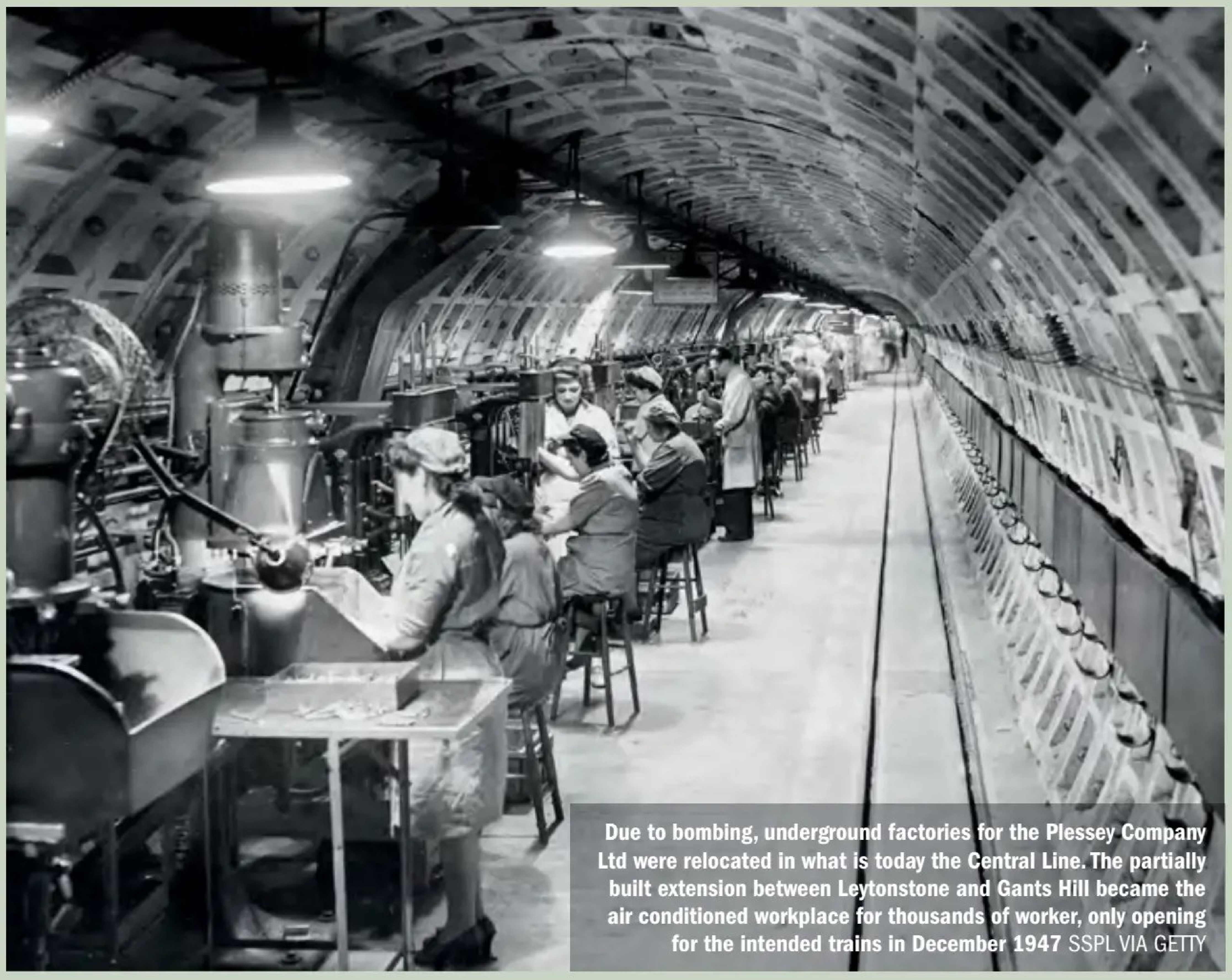
L.N.E.R in conjunction with
The LOCAL AUTHORITY

Admit one Person for Shelter
(if available) at
HIGHGATE Station

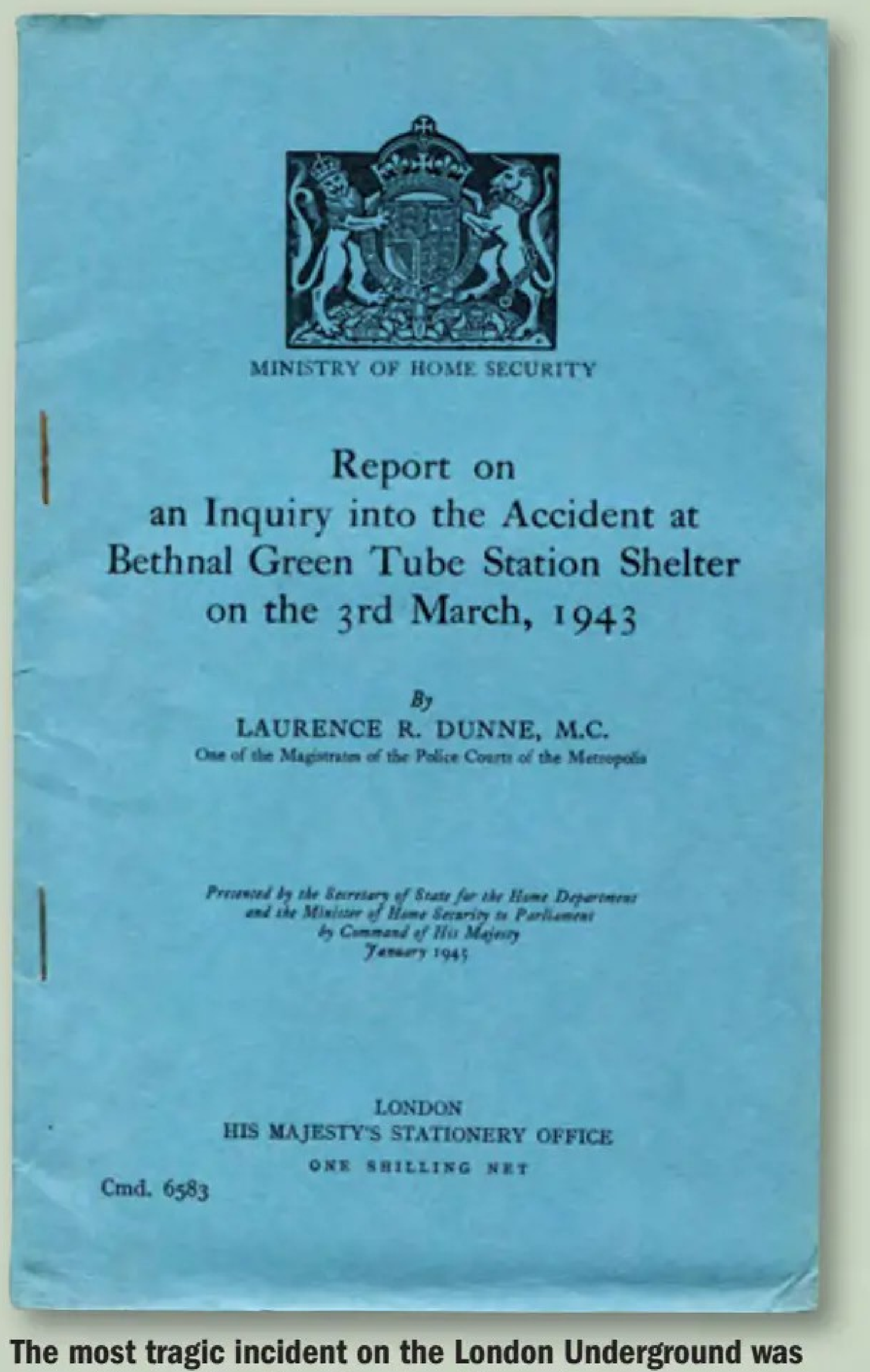
Persons permitted to use this Station as, or as a means of access to, an Air Raid Shelter do so at their own risk in all respects.
FOR FURTHER CONDITIONS SEE BACK

1899

Work completing the new Highgate Underground station was delayed by the outbreak of war. From October 1940, it was used as an air raid shelter, only opening to trains in January 1941. Though not terribly rare, such station shelter tickets are hotly collected and can fetch well above £100 each



Due to bombing, underground factories for the Plessey Company Ltd were relocated in what is today the Central Line. The partially built extension between Leytonstone and Gants Hill became the air conditioned workplace for thousands of worker, only opening for the intended trains in December 1947 SSPL VIA GETTY



MINISTRY OF HOME SECURITY

Report on
an Inquiry into the Accident at
Bethnal Green Tube Station Shelter
on the 3rd March, 1943

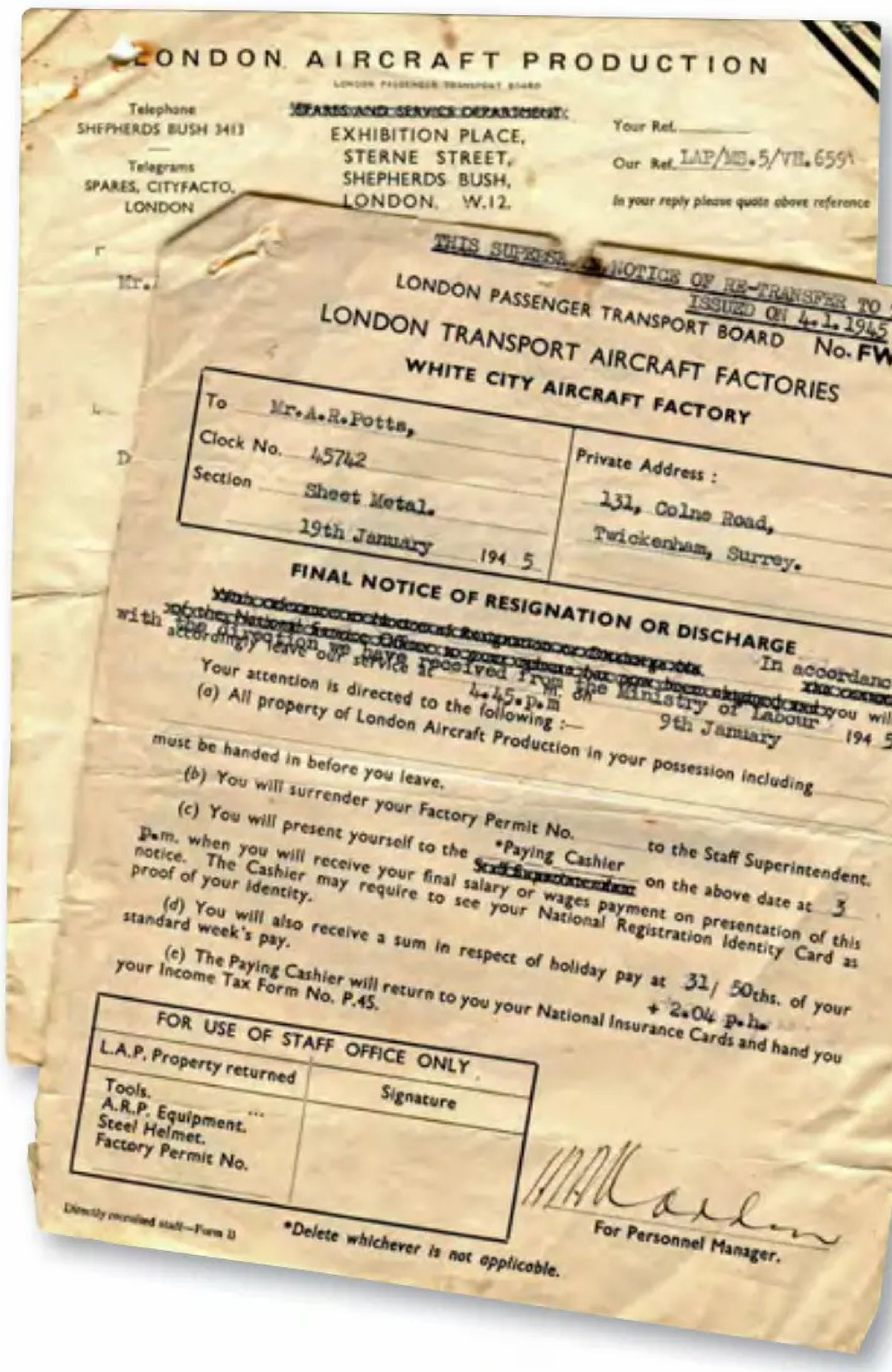
By
LAURENCE R. DUNNE, M.C.
One of the Magistrates of the Police Courts of the Metropolis

Presented by the Secretary of State for the Home Department and the Minister of Home Security to Parliament by Command of His Majesty January 1945

LONDON
HIS MAJESTY'S STATIONERY OFFICE
ONE SHILLING NET

Cmd. 6583

The most tragic incident on the London Underground was caused by panic rather than bombing, when a crush at Bethnal Green station led to the deaths of 173 shelterers. The 35-page Dunne Inquiry into the disaster was published by HMSO in 1945. Rare, £70



LONDON AIRCRAFT PRODUCTION

LONDON PASSENGER TRANSPORT BOARD

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SHEPHERDS BUSH 3413

Telegrams
SPARES, CITYFACTO,
LONDON

~~SPARES AND SERVICE DEPARTMENT~~
EXHIBITION PLACE,
STERNE STREET,
SHEPHERDS BUSH,
LONDON, W.12.

Your Ref. ____
Our Ref. LAP/MS.5/VH.6559
In your reply please quote above reference

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LONDON PASSENGER TRANSPORT BOARD
LONDON TRANSPORT AIRCRAFT FACTORIES
WHITE CITY AIRCRAFT FACTORY

No. FW 057

To Mr.A.R.Potts,	Private Address : 131, Colne Road, Twickenham, Surrey.
Clock No. 45742	
Section Sheet Metal.	
19th January 194 5	

FINAL NOTICE OF RESIGNATION OR DISCHARGE

In accordance with the direction we have received from the Ministry of Labour you will accordingly leave our service at 4.45.p.m on 9th January 194 5

Your attention is directed to the following :—

(a) All property of London Aircraft Production in your possession including ____ must be handed in before you leave.

(b) You will surrender your Factory Permit No. ____

(c) You will present yourself to the *Paying Cashier ~~Staff Superintendent~~ on the above date at 3 p.m. when you will receive your final salary or wages payment on presentation of this notice. The Cashier may require to see your National Registration Identity Card as proof of your identity.

(d) You will also receive a sum in respect of holiday pay at 31/ 50ths. of your standard week's pay. + 2.04 p.h.

(e) The Paying Cashier will return to you your National Insurance Cards and hand you your Income Tax Form No. P.45.

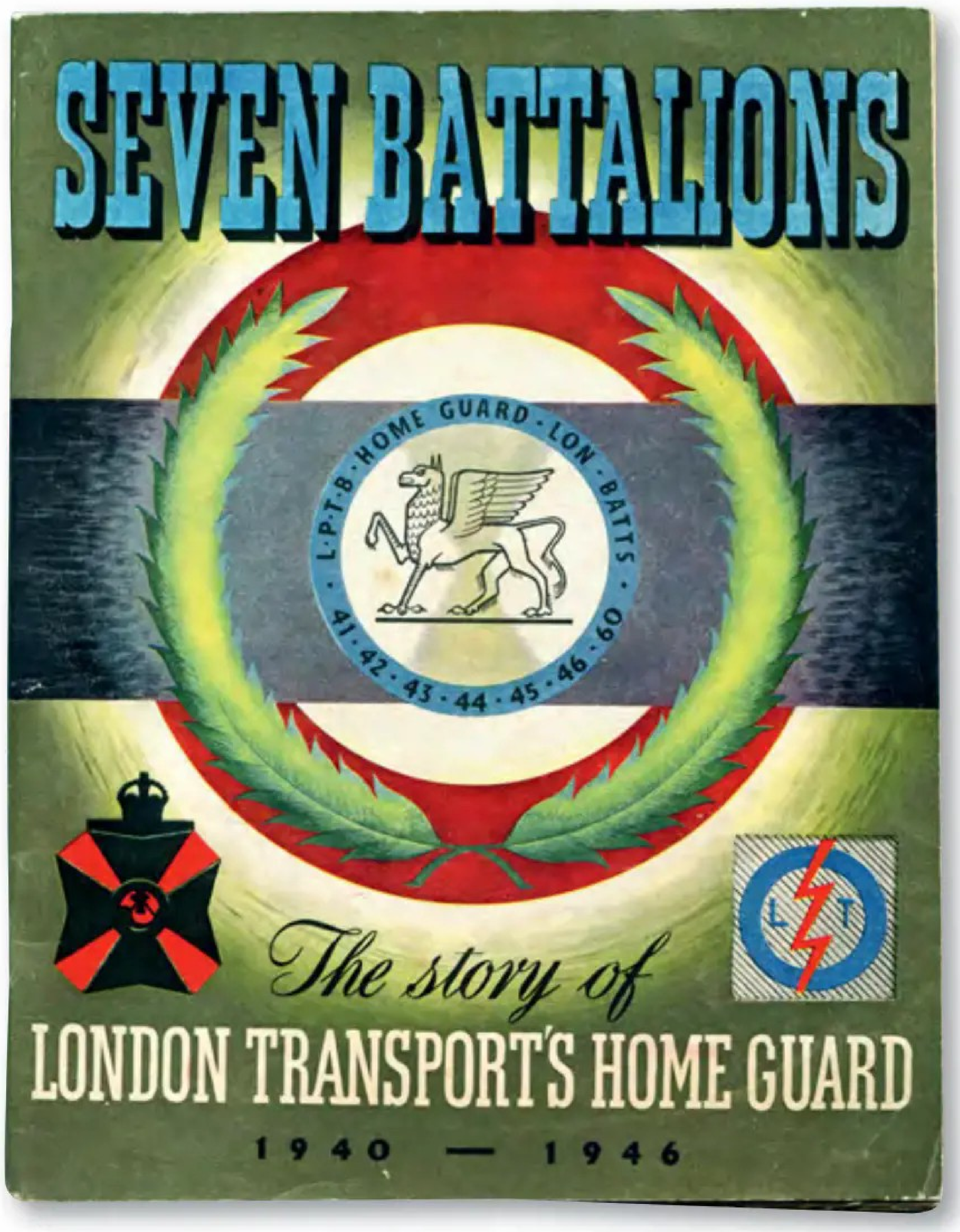
FOR USE OF STAFF OFFICE ONLY	
L.A.P. Property returned	Signature
Tools. A.R.P. Equipment. Steel Helmet. Factory Permit No.	

For Personnel Manager.

Directly recruited staff—Form B

*Delete whichever is not applicable.

London Transport combined with four other companies to create the London Aircraft Production Group, using its works at White City, Chiswick and Aldenham to produce 710 Halifax bombers. These printed documents record the final service of a White City sheet metal worker in January 1945. Rare, £25



Such was the importance of the capital's public transport network, it had its own Home Guard organisation, comprising 30,000 London Transport workers. Their war was told in the illustrated booklet *Seven Battalions: The Story of London Transport's Home Guard 1940-1946*, published by LPTB in 1947. Rare, £40

> *"London Transport also helped the war effort by converting its bus factories to produce bombers, combining with four other companies to create the biggest factory in the world"*

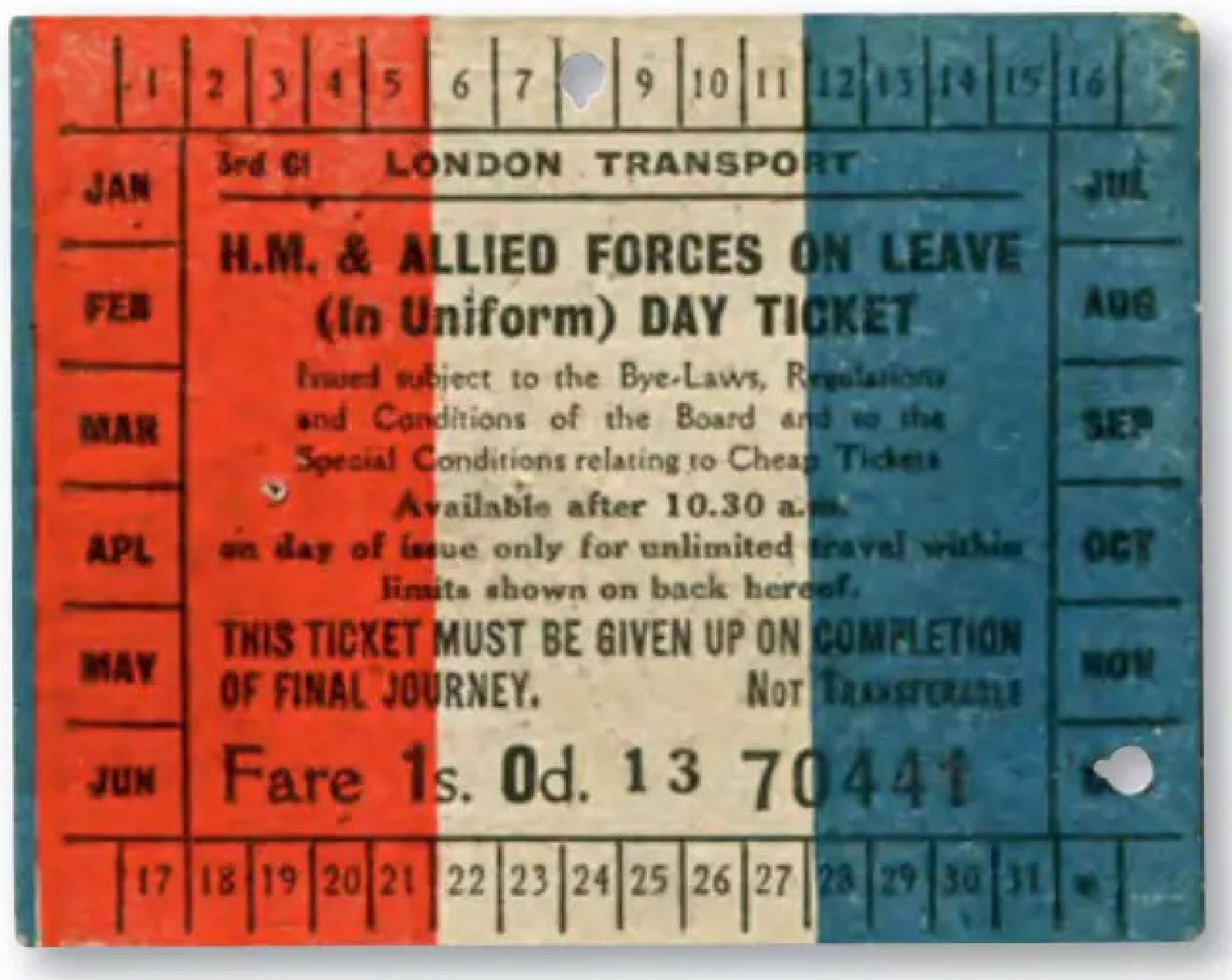
Street station was converted into a bomb-resistant base for the Railway Executive Committee, which ran Britain's mainline railways, while Churchill and his cabinet also occasionally sheltered there. Brompton Road station served as the operations room of the 1st Anti-Aircraft Division defending London. South Kensington controlled hydrophones that detected whether bombs had fallen in the Thames and required the closing of tunnel floodgates. Aldwych provided storage for the British Museum's Elgin Marbles, though it was later realised to be not as bombproof as reckoned.

Working down below

One of the most impressive wartime uses of the Underground occurred on the Central Line. In September and October 1940, the important Plessey electronics factory in Ilford, Essex, was heavily bombed. Looking for an alternative, bombproof location was not easy without relocating to the other side of the country, until it was noted that 2.5 miles of unfinished tunnels, paused due to the outbreak of war, lay between Leytonstone and Gants Hill.

Conversion began immediately, although, cleverly, construction was staggered so that, from 1941, workers could begin producing components. In March 1942, after 16 month's work, the factory was completed, fully equipped with air conditioning, manufacturing machines and even a battery-powered miniature railway to deliver parts and collect finished components from the 2,000 mostly women workers, who operated in shifts, 24 hours a day. The factory closed at the war's end and this section of the Central Line finally opened in 1947.

That was not all. From 1941, London Transport helped the war effort by converting its bus-making factories to produce bombers for the RAF. It combined with four other companies to create the London Aircraft Production Group, using its works at White City, Chiswick and Aldenham to make parts for the new Handley Page Halifax. The final components were assembled at de Havilland's Leavesden airfield, near Watford, which by volume, became the biggest factory in the world. By 1945, 710 Halifaxes had been completed – the last, a Mk.III named *London Pride*, taking off from Leavesden on April 16, 1945. Today, the site serves as Warner Bros Studios.



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London Underground provided Allied soldiers on leave with a great and easy way to see the capital, via this colourful ticket which allowed a day's unlimited travel for a mere shilling (around £2.75 today). Uncommon, £15

Such was the importance of this great travel network to the capital and the war effort, the organisation had its own Home Guard organisation, comprising 30,000 London Transport workers formed into seven battalions, providing defence against invasion or sabotage for the vital underground stations, tunnels, power stations and depots. It should be remembered all this came at a cost: some 426 London Transport staff were killed and nearly 3,000 injured in the course of their duties. BW

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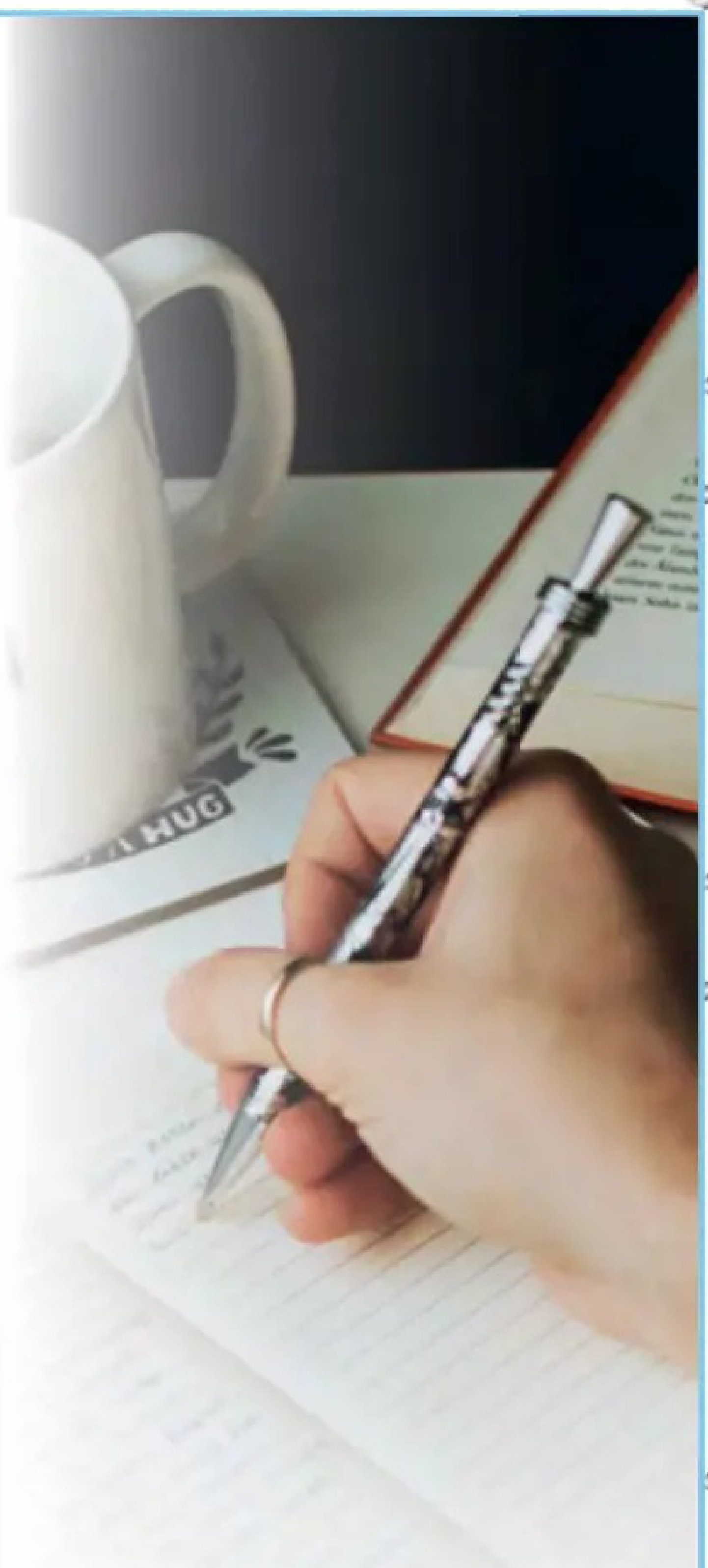

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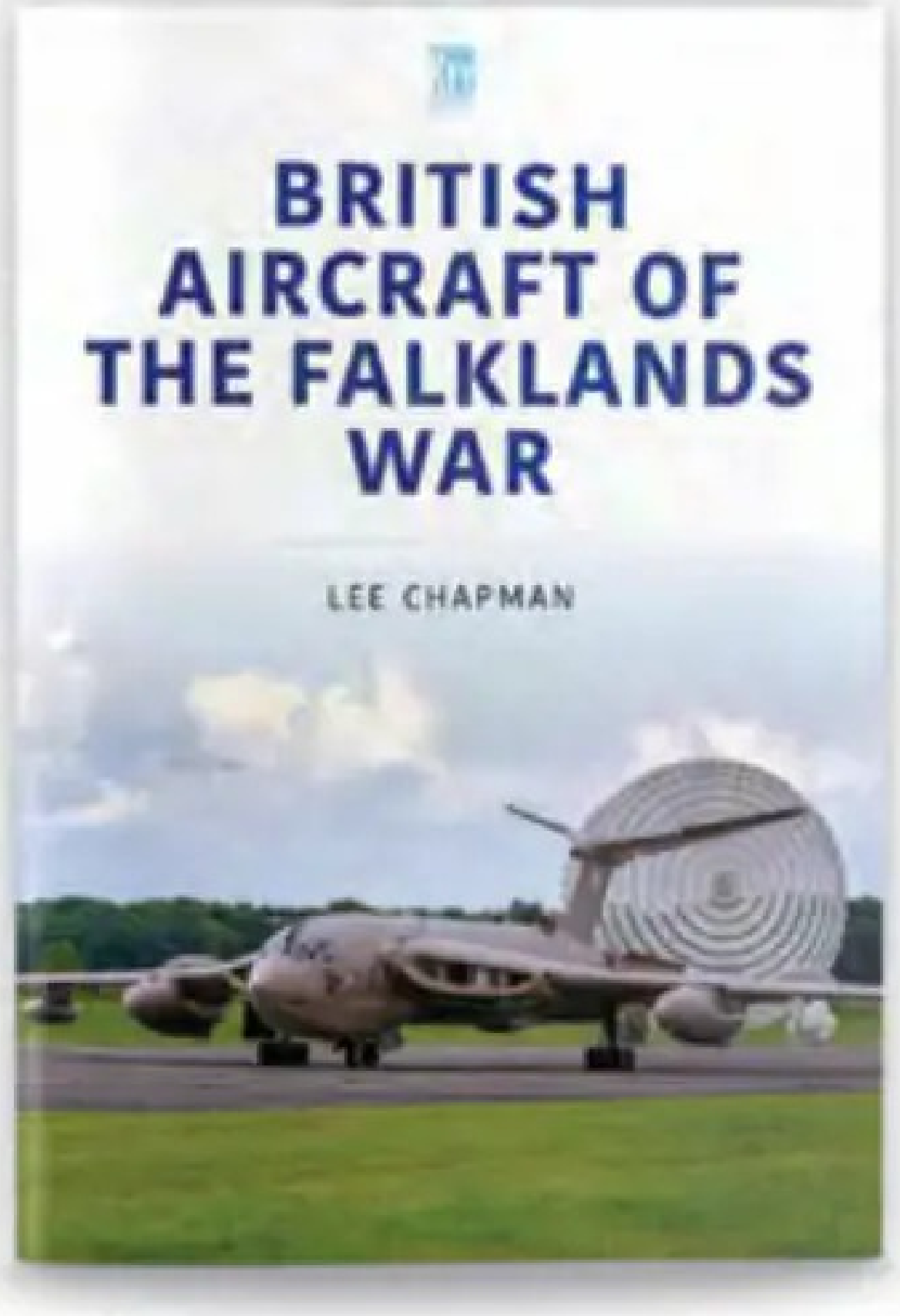

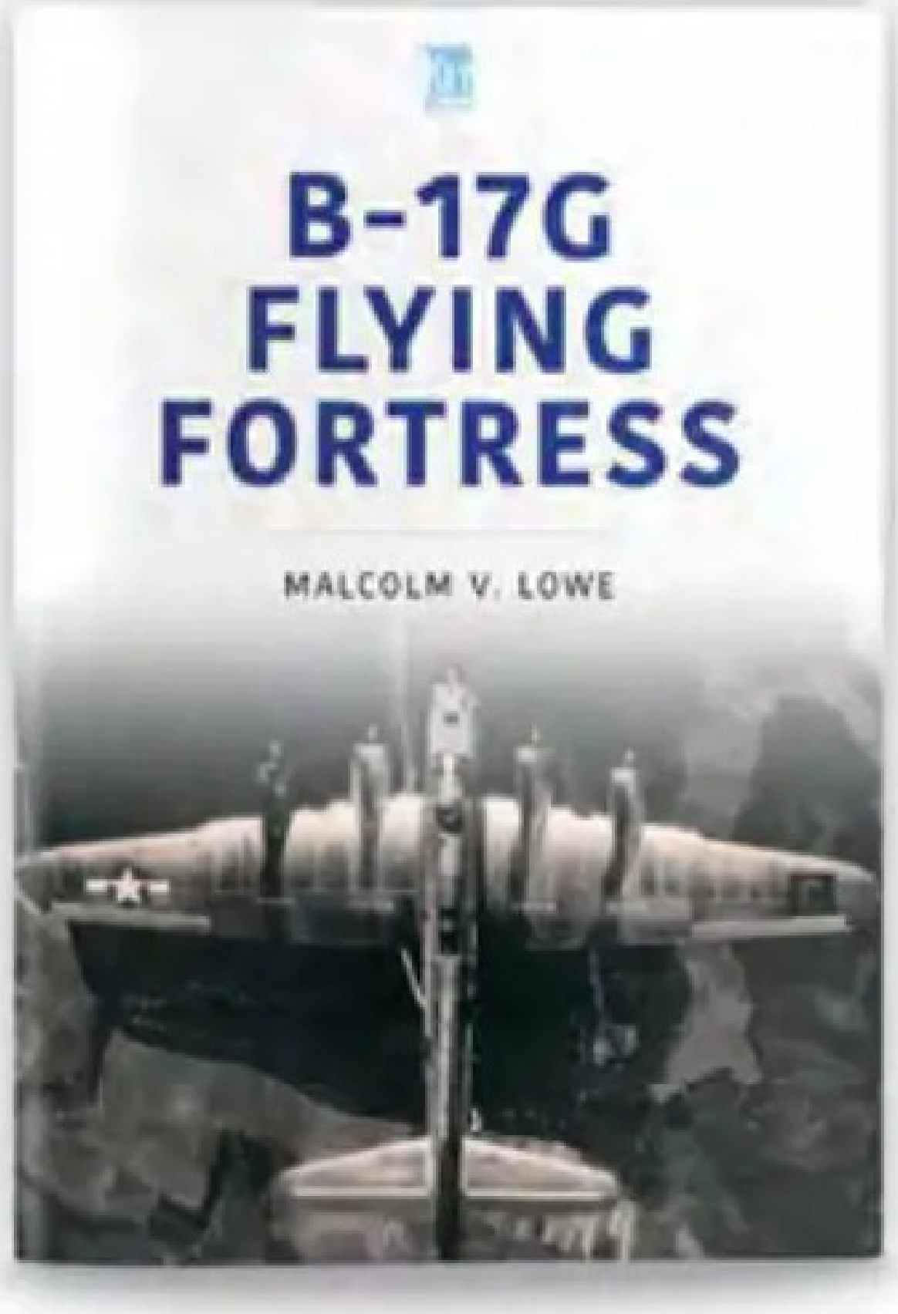

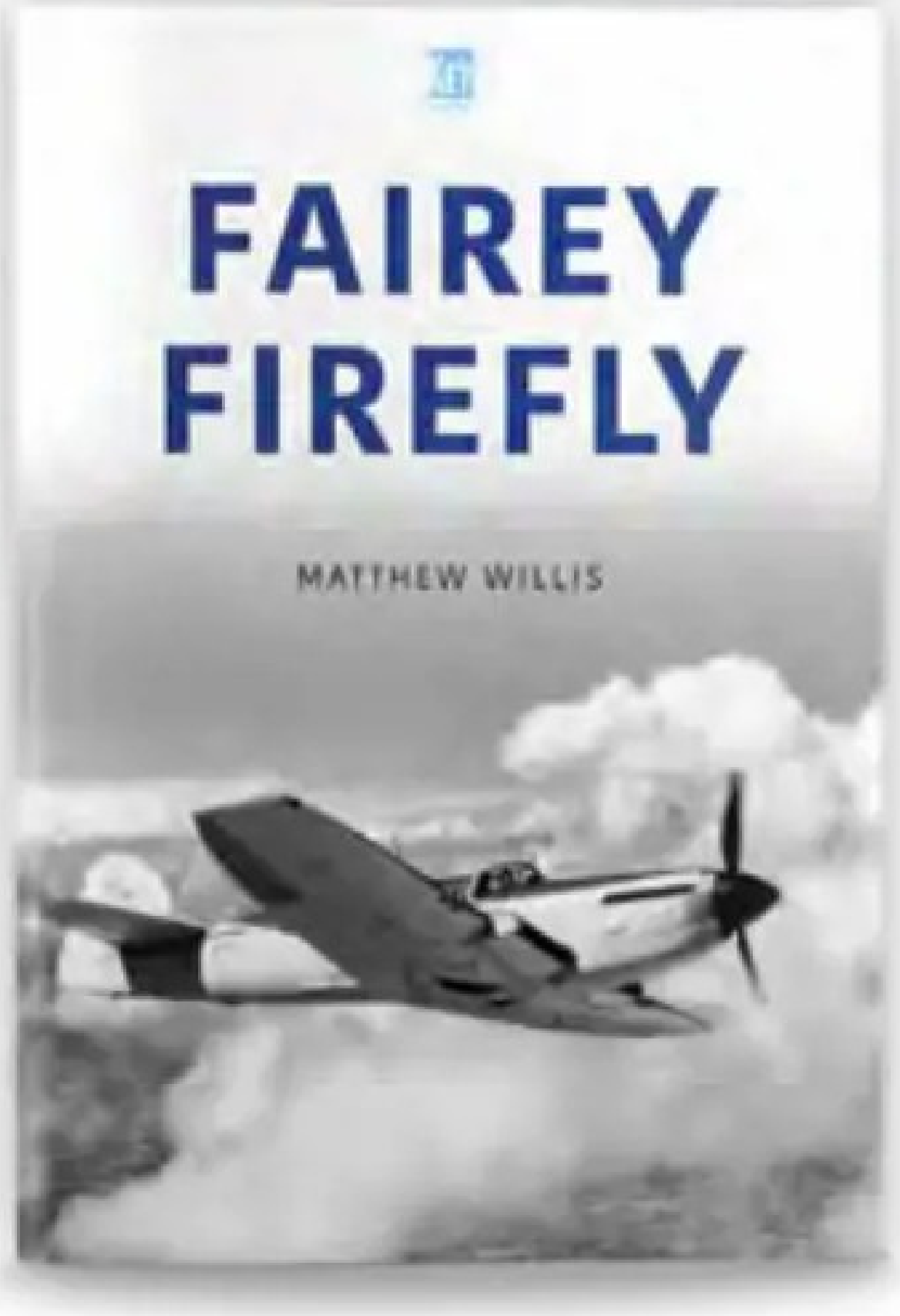

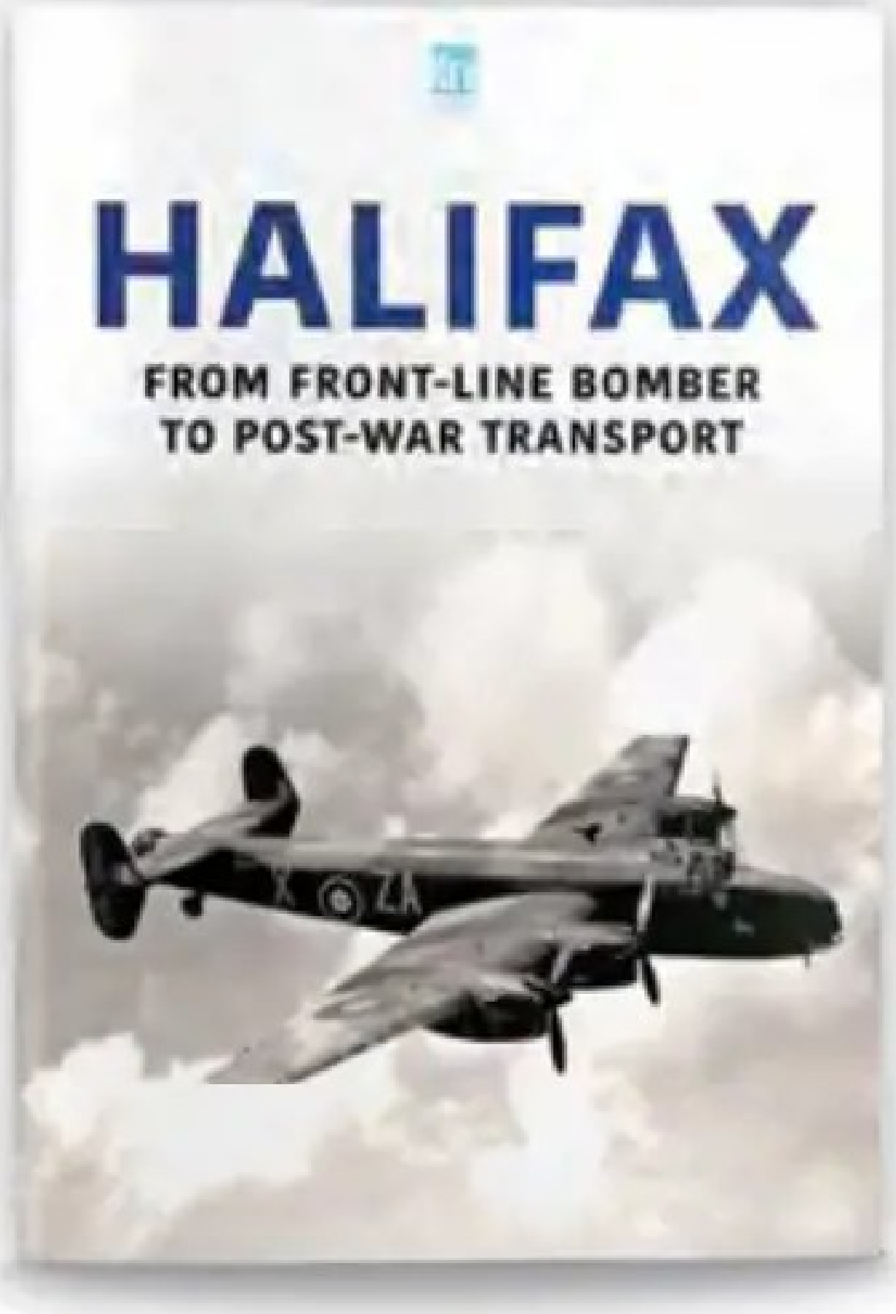

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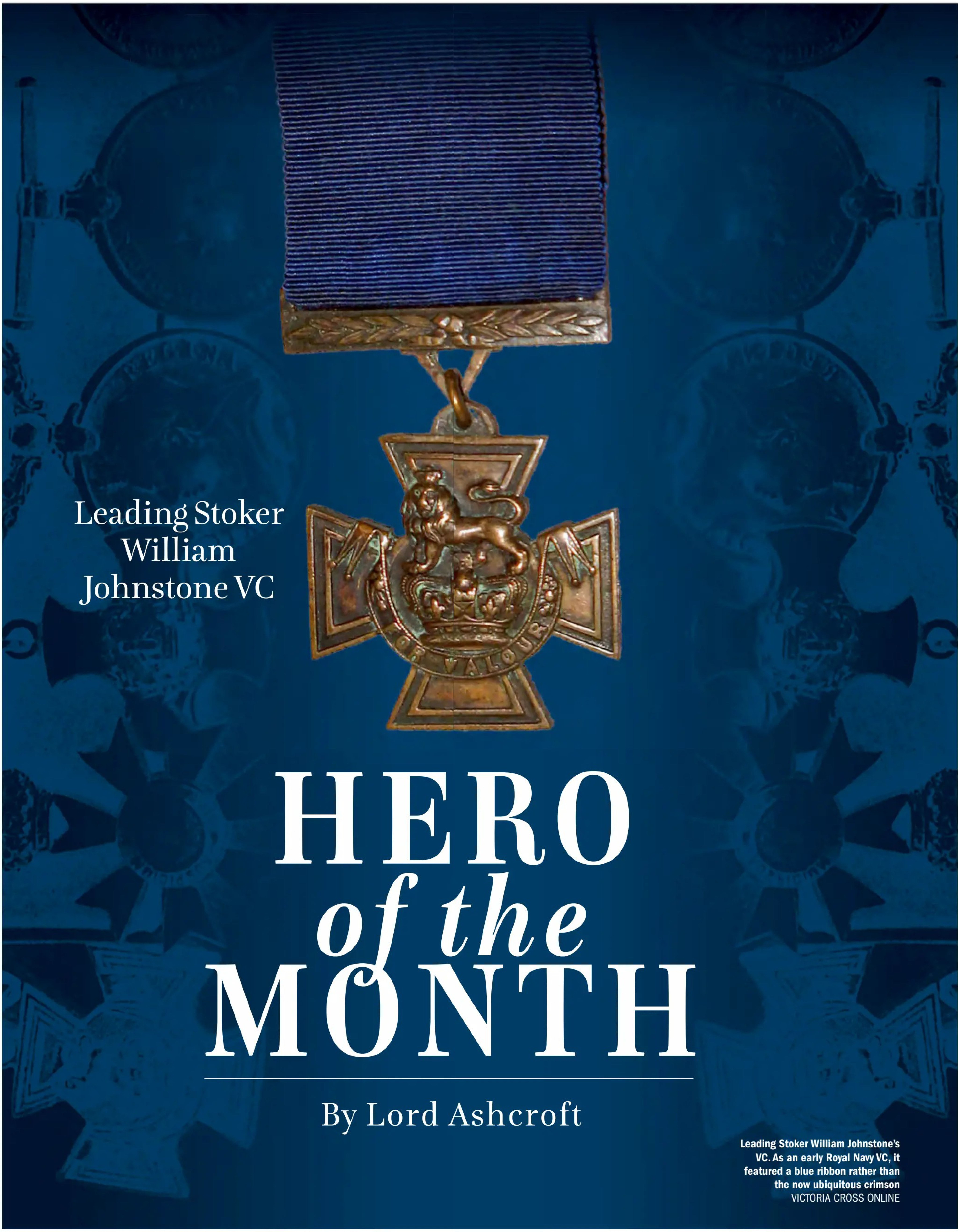


Leading Stoker William Johnstone VC

HERO of the MONTH

By Lord Ashcroft

Leading Stoker William Johnstone's VC. As an early Royal Navy VC, it featured a blue ribbon rather than the now ubiquitous crimson
VICTORIA CROSS ONLINE

There is no photograph of him in existence. His nationality is a matter of debate. Even his exact name is not known for sure. However, one thing is certain: the man decorated for the second action in the entire history of the Victoria Cross was incredibly brave, having taken part in an early special forces-style operation, one conducted more than a century before the creation of the SAS.

His decoration was awarded in the name of "William Johnstone" but for 170 years the details of this man's background have been, at best, vague. However, earlier this year I accepted an invitation from two Scandinavian historians who had carried out research into the actions of Johnstone and his fellow VC recipient, the splendidly named John Bythesea (then a lieutenant, but later promoted to rear-admiral).

I visited the archipelago of Åland, midway between Finland and Sweden, to meet Johan Granlund and Mikael Apel at the scene of some of the earliest naval battles of the Crimean War. The two men had approached me out of the blue in the knowledge that I am the proud custodian of the VC awarded to Bythesea, who led the two-man adventure with Johnstone as his able deputy.

Friendly farmer

With the help of the two historians, I have been able to shed new light on the exact circumstances of the VC action and, in particular, on Johnstone's background.

The Crimean War was fought from October 1853 to February 1856 between Russia and an alliance that included Britain and France. Early in the war, the British fleet was stationed in the Baltic Sea off the coast of mainland Åland, besieging the coastal fortress of Bomarsund. Captain Hastings Yelverton, from HMS *Arrogant*, one of the larger ships in the area, paid a visit to Admiral Sir Charles Napier, the fleet's commander.

> *"Bythesea and Johnstone rowed ashore, clearly with minimal planning relating to what lay ahead"*

During their meeting, Napier gently reprimanded Yelverton for the fact that vital mail from the Russian Tzar was nevertheless being constantly landed on Vårdö, one of the Åland islands, and forwarded from there to the Russian commanding officer in Bomarsund. Napier's gripe was that the British forces had taken no action to prevent this.

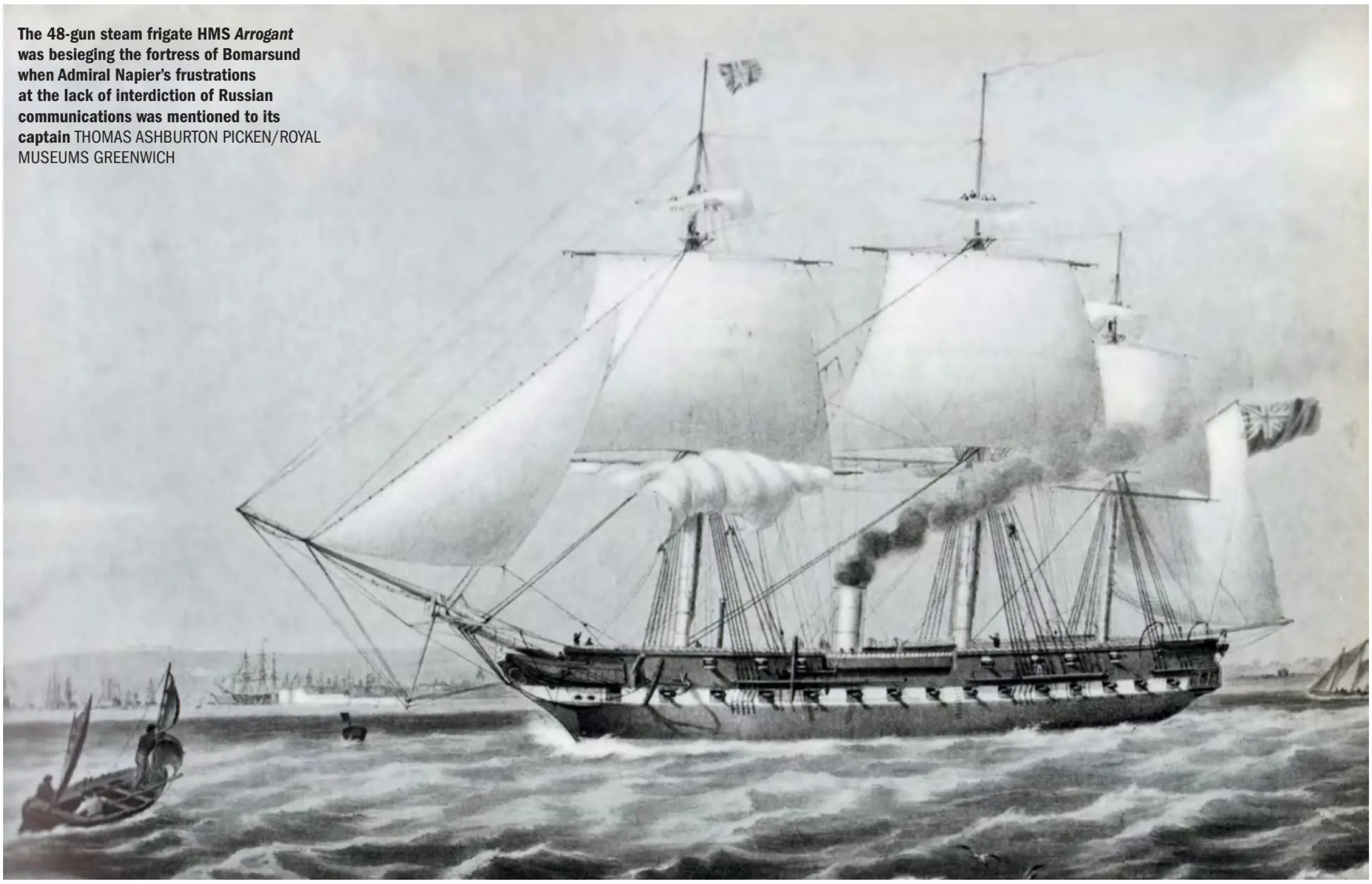
On returning to his ship, Yelverton mentioned this to his junior officers and one of them, Bythesea, became determined to do something to disrupt this flow of official despatches that British intelligence sources had identified. Bythesea, then 27 and originally from Bath, devised an ambitious plan to slip on to Vårdö and to intercept the enemy mail as it was being moved across the island. He chose Johnstone to accompany him on the mission.

On August 9, 1854, just two days after Napier's conversation with Yelverton, Bythesea and Johnstone rowed ashore, clearly with minimal planning relating to what lay ahead.

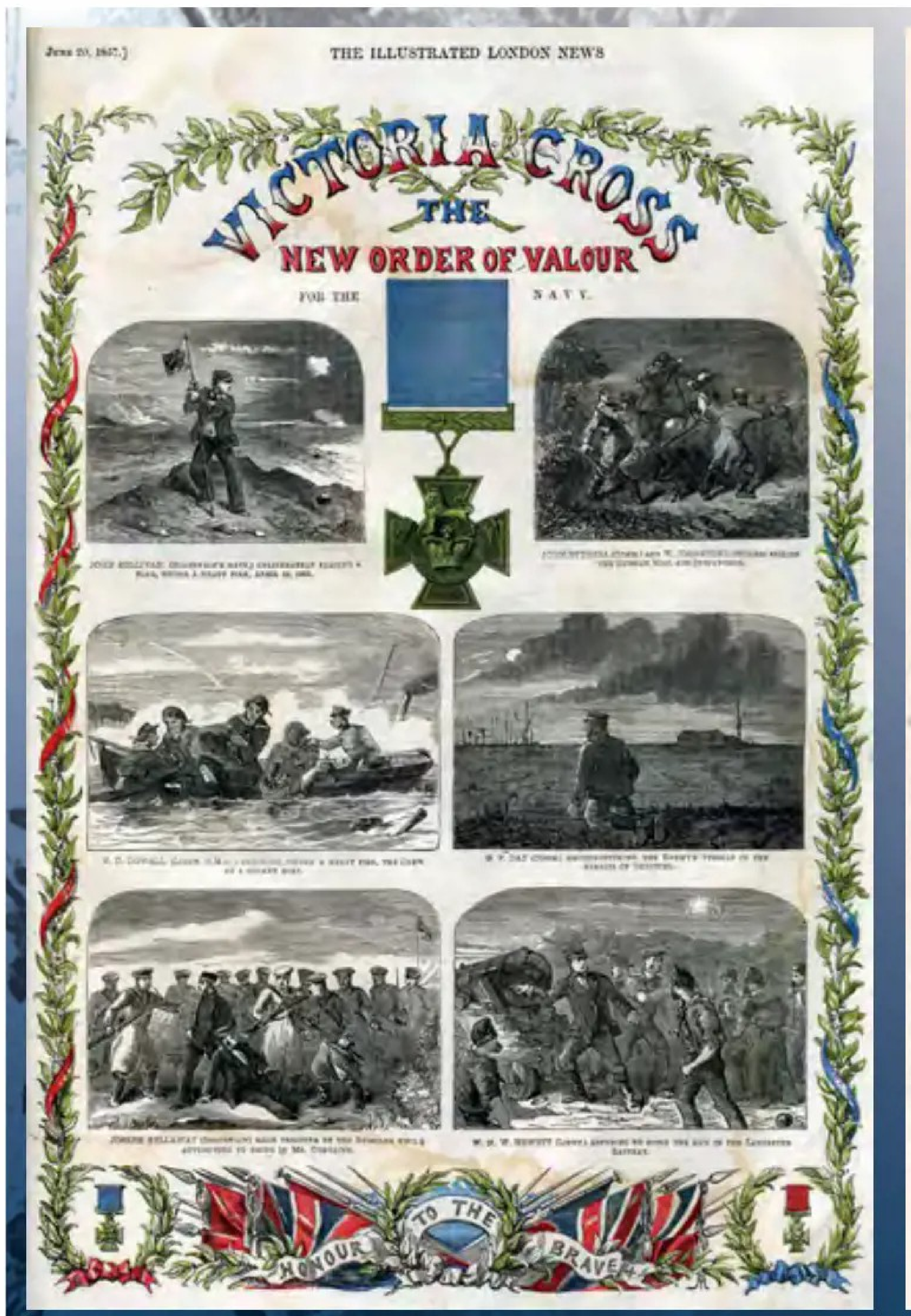
Luck was on their side. According to an account published in *The Strand Magazine* in 1896, they made their way to a local farmhouse, where the owner had been forced to hand over all his horses to the Russians. He was therefore only too willing to help them and gave them food and lodging. On August 12, having been on the island for three days, Bythesea was told by the well-informed farmer that the Russian mail boat had landed, and the despatches were to be sent down to the fortress at Bomarsund at nightfall.

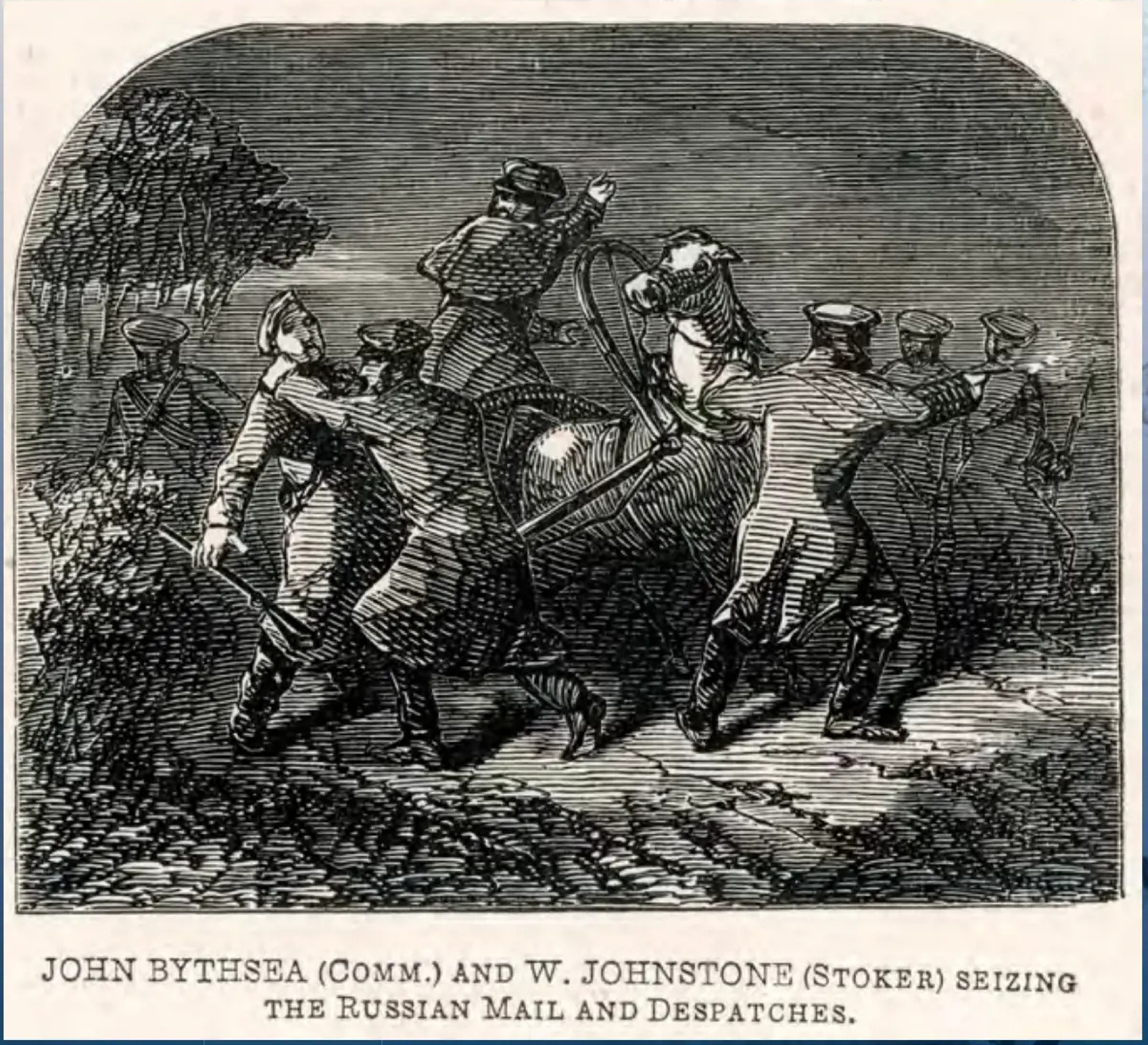
That night, Bythesea and Johnstone hid in the bushes along the route close to a 15th century church on the island. Armed with a single flintlock pistol each, they ambushed the five unarmed messengers, capturing at least three along with the despatches.

Bythesea and Johnstone returned to their hidden boat and forced their captors to row out to the *Arrogant*. Johnstone steered the craft while Bythesea aimed his pistol at the prisoners. On their arrival, the prisoners



The 48-gun steam frigate HMS *Arrogant* was besieging the fortress of Bomarsund when Admiral Napier's frustrations at the lack of interdiction of Russian communications was mentioned to its captain THOMAS ASHBURTON PICKEN/ROYAL MUSEUMS GREENWICH




JOHN BYTHSEA (COMM.) AND W. JOHNSTONE (STOKER) SEIZING THE RUSSIAN MAIL AND DESPATCHES.

While no photographs of Johnstone exist, there are a handful of sketches of him and of the VC-earning raid. This image, from the Illustrated London News of June 20, 1857, shows some of the first recipients of the VC for deeds in the Crimean War, with Johnstone and Bythesea top right. ZOOM: The raid in focus SMITH ARCHIVE/CHRONICLE/ALAMY

were taken on board while the despatches were taken to Admiral Napier and General Baraguay d'Hilliers, the French commander, who were both thrilled by the success of the bold mission.

> *"Bythesea was the second man to have his VC pinned on him by the Queen...Johnstone was serving overseas at that time and had his VC sent out to his ship"*

Mystery man

But who was Bythesea's courageous accomplice? In the official citation for the two VCs, he was identified as ship's stoker "William Johnstone". However, the man was also known as "John Johnstone" and also "John Johnson" He had worked at sea, initially on merchant ships, since the late 1830s.

Until now, it has been widely believed that Johnstone was a Swede and that, at some point, his name "Johansson" was anglicised. It was reported that he had been chosen to accompany Bythesea because he spoke Swedish. To further confuse matters, Johnstone appears to have claimed when he joined the Royal Navy that he was born in Hannover, Germany.

However, the two historians, Granlund and Apel, have now reinvestigated the incident and shed new light on the identity of Bythesea's accomplice and exactly what happened in the summer of 1854. Their findings have been published in a history journal, *Historisk Tidskrift för Finland*.

Together, they unearthed a Russian police report drawn up at the time after interviewing islanders from Vårdö in late 1854, including the captured messengers carrying the despatches – who were later released. The report provides detailed information about the event, for example that the mail captured consisted of letters that due to the naval blockade had never reached Bomarsund, but were instead about to be returned to Finland, and that the farmer, Olof Carlsson, had provided Bythesea and Johnstone with the boat they used to get back to the *Arrogant*.

Johnstone's companion on the raid and fellow VC recipient was John Bythesea, a junior officer who later rose to rear admiral IWM

Their evidence also strongly suggests that Johnstone was from Finland – not Sweden – and that he hid his birthplace because at the time Finland was part of the wider Russian Empire and he would not have wanted to suggest he had links with "the enemy".

One of the captured messengers was in no doubt that one of the sailors, clearly Johnstone, stated that he was from Kristinestad, Finland. The man added that Johnstone had lived in England "from his younger years" and that he "spoke bad Swedish".

From this, the two amateur historians concluded in their written report: "If the information is correct, one could reject the hypothesis that the man who was Bythesea's companion on Vårdö was a Swede who temporarily enlisted in the British Navy. Instead, Johnstone seems to have been a naturalised Englishman, born in Finland, but who emigrated so long ago that he had partially forgotten his mother tongue."

They added: "Revealing in Swedish to his Ålandic prisoners that he was born in Kristinestad, must however have seemed risk-free to Johnstone."

Also, according to the police report, Bythesea and Johnstone returned to Vårdö a second time following their initial three-day visit for which they were awarded the VC. They went again on August 14, to search for further mail that was not in the bag seized from the messengers. It is not clear how they knew about this additional mail, but they returned to their ship with three further letters.

Unfortunate futures

It was at Queen Victoria's behest that the VC was instituted on January 29, 1856, for extreme bravery in the face of the enemy. Furthermore, the awards were made retrospective to the beginning of the Crimean War.

The first VC to have been awarded – in chronological terms – was the decoration to Mate (later Rear-Admiral) Charles Lucas, who as a young officer was serving in HMS *Hecla* at the start of the Crimean War. His VC was for his brave deed in throwing a live, unexploded shell overboard on June 21, 1854, after it had landed on the ship's deck.

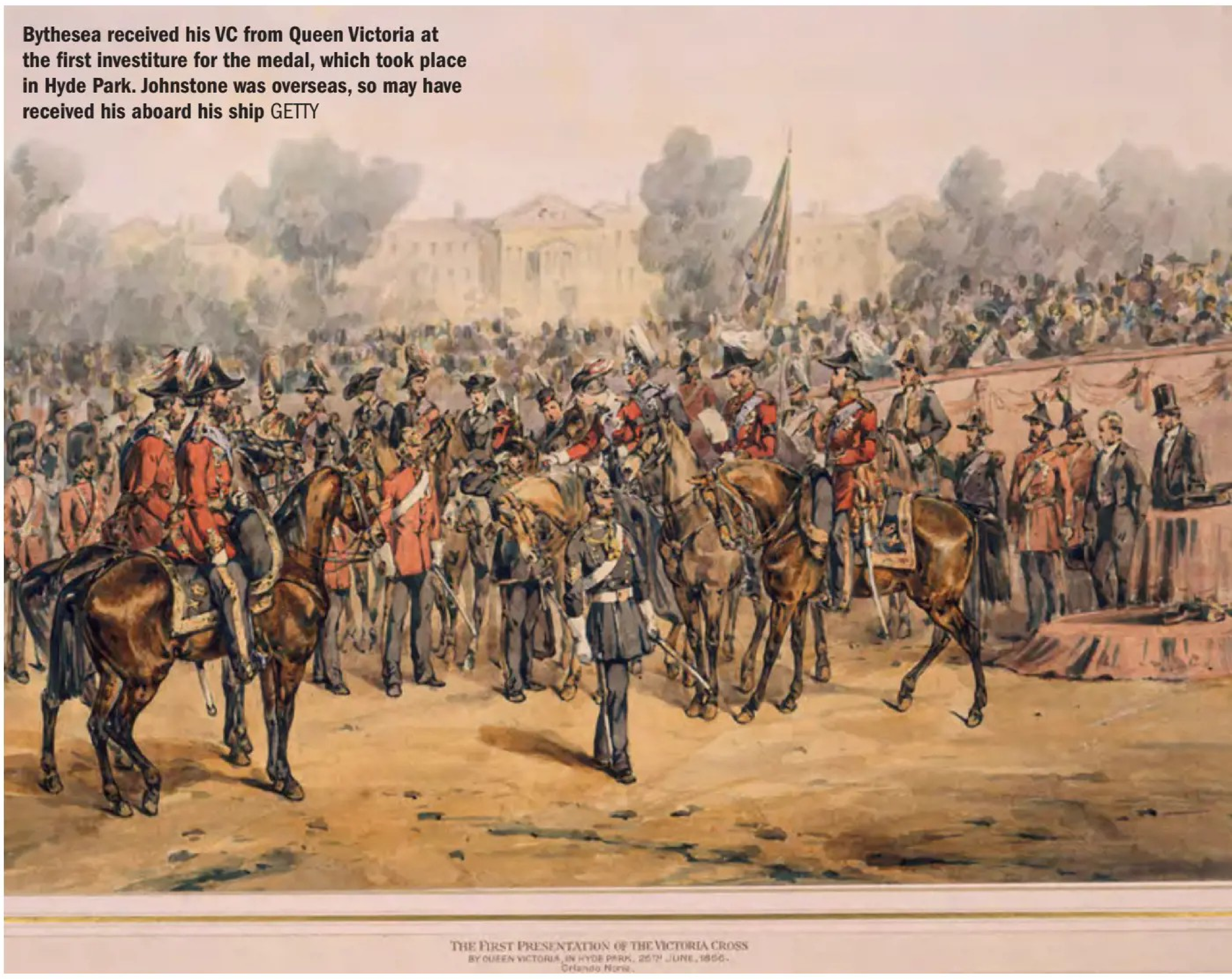
However, the next actions for which two VCs were awarded were to Bythesea and Johnstone. The awards were announced in *The London Gazette* on February 24, 1857. The initial investiture took place in Hyde Park, London, on June 26 that year. On that occasion and in front of cheering crowd of some 100,000 people, 62 recipients received their decorations from the Queen, while the 31 recipients serving overseas received theirs at a later date.

Bythesea was the second man to have his VC pinned on him by the Queen, who remained mounted on her horse, Sunset, while conferring each award. Fampusly, she accidentally "stabbed" Bythesea in the chest while pinning his medal on him. Johnstone was serving overseas at that time and had his medal sent out for presentation aboard his ship.

However, there are sad postscripts relating to both VC recipients. As stated earlier, Bythesea rose to the rank of rear-admiral, but his career ended in disgrace when he was court martialled after his ship ran aground near Malta in 1872. It was an unfortunate end to his previously unblemished career. He died in London in August 1906, aged 79.

Bythesea's VC came up for auction in London in April 2007. By then, I had large collections of both VCs and special forces decorations. When I successfully bid for Bythesea's VC, it was, for me at least, in many ways the ultimate military decoration for this period.

Bythesea received his VC from Queen Victoria at the first investiture for the medal, which took place in Hyde Park. Johnstone was overseas, so may have received his aboard his ship GETTY


THE FIRST PRESENTATION OF THE VICTORIA CROSS
BY QUEEN VICTORIA, IN HYDE PARK, 26TH JUNE, 1856.
Orlando Norie.

Johnstone met an untimely death in August 1857, aged just 34. After attacking another sailor with a knife on board a naval ship in the West Indies, he felt such remorse that he turned the knife on himself, slitting his own throat. He was buried at sea in St Vincent Passage. It is not known whether Johnstone's VC was ever presented to him on board his ship, HMS *Brunswick*, but it was later sent by registered post to his widow, Eliza.

Johnstone's VC was acquired by the London auction house Spink in the 1930s and sold to the wealthy American collector, Robert B Honeyman Jr. In 1957, he donated his collection into The Museum of Natural History of Los Angeles County, where the medal is kept today.

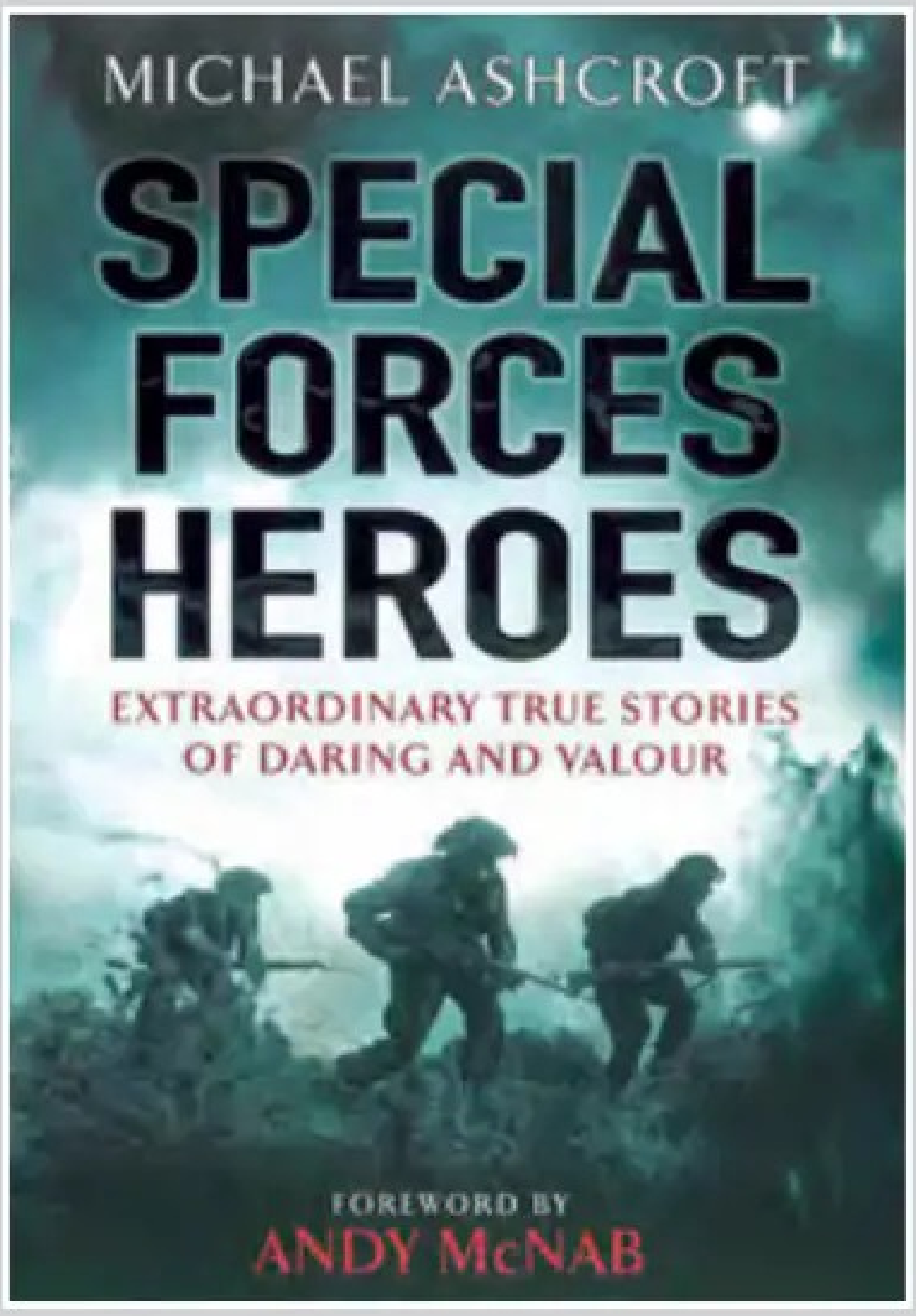
I am indebted to Mikael Apel and Johan Granlund for sharing their findings with me. I am delighted, too, that the full and accurate story of these two famous VC actions can finally be told.

Before I left Åland, the two historians showed me the remains of Bomarsund fort, which was destroyed by the victors in September 1854, a couple of weeks after it had been conquered. They also showed me around the Bomarsund visitors' centre, which tells the story of Russia's attempts at expansion and how it was thwarted. Both the fort and the visitors' centre lie on a 2,000-acre historical site.

Finally, as I also discovered, on a low-lying grassy headland at the far east of Åland, there is a memorial dedicated to the earliest three recipients of the Victoria Cross. Inscribed "Bomarsund 1854" – the name of the island fortress – and the date of their bravery, it reads: "To commemorate the fallen of the British naval force in the Baltic and the bravery of their comrades." BW

SPECIAL FORCES HEROES

Lord Ashcroft KCMG PC is an international businessman, philanthropist, author and pollster. His book, *Special Forces Heroes*, was published in hardback in 2008 and, later, paperback. For more information, visit specialforcesheroes.com. Lord Ashcroft's VC and GC collection is on public display at the Imperial War Museum, London. For more information, visit iwm.org.uk/heroes and details about his VC collection may be found at lordashcroftmedals.com. For more information on Lord Ashcroft's work, visit lordashcroft.com. Follow him on X and Facebook: @LordAshcroft



ROUGH RIDERS
RELUCTANT PARTNER

Military History with Pete and Gary

No.34

As we consider the winter season, it is difficult not to think of the terrible conditions in the trenches in the Ypres area, Flanders, back in December 1914. By this time General Sir Douglas Haig had been promoted to command the First Army of the rapidly expanding British Expeditionary Force (BEF).

During a visit by King George V to the Western Front, Haig tried to get the monarch to understand the awful nature of the fighting – drawing on his own vivid experiences to show that not everyone could stand up to the terrors of war. Training and discipline would be vital if the hordes of civilians being recruited across the Empire were to be turned into soldiers.

"The King seemed very cheery but inclined to think that all our troops are by nature brave, and is ignorant of all the efforts which commanders must make to keep up the morale of their men in war, and of all the training which is necessary in peace in order to enable a company to go forward as an organised unit in the face of almost certain death. I told him of the crowds of fugitives who came back down the Menin Road from time to time during the Ypres battle having thrown everything they could, including their rifles and packs, to escape, with a look of absolute terror on their faces, such as I have never before seen on any human being's face."

Haig was right. By December 1914, trench warfare had its vile grip on the whole of the Western Front. There was little honour and glory to be had fighting in water-filled ditches. Men died as snipers preyed on the unwary or shells crashed down from nowhere. But there was a last flicker of humanity at the end of December, when Christmas Day seemed, just for a moment, to break the ice between the entrenched enemies.

The results were witnessed by Private George Ashurst, a new arrival, having been sent to join the 2nd Lancashire Fusiliers. Pete still remembers the long interview he did with George for the Imperial War Museum back in the early 1980s: "It came to 11 o'clock, we'd been standing up on the firing parapet and nobody was shooting. So, one or two fellows jumped out on top: another two stopped in the trench with their rifles ready. But they didn't need them. As these two fellows got up others followed and there were scores of us on top at the finish.

"It was grand, you could stretch your legs and run about. We tied an empty sandbag up with its string and kicked it about on top – just to keep warm of course. And Jerry, he was sliding on an ice pond just behind the line. We could tell by the way he started off, went so gently across to the other end and then another followed. We did not intermingle. Part way through we were all playing football, all on top.

"Some Germans came to their wire with a newspaper, they were waving it. A corporal in our company went for it, went right to the wire and the Germans shook hands with him, wished him 'Merry Christmas' and gave him the paper. Of course, we couldn't read a word of it, so it had to go to an officer. There were fellows walking about on top of our trench at five o'clock. Not a shot had been fired and the Armistice finished at one o'clock! It was so pleasant to get out of that trench and walk and run about. It was heaven."

Sadly, the guns would not stop again for four long years.

Peter Hart and Gary Bain's long running 'Pete and Gary's Military History' weekly podcast is available via podcast services. Follow Pete and Gary on X, formerly known as Twitter: @HartMilitary

Next Month

February 2025, Issue 214

Inside Your Magazine

On sale January 30

In early 1945, as the Allies pushed on the Rhine, the 21st Army Group picked its way through the Reichswald, its ground units supported by almost endless waves of aircraft. Among them were the Typhoons of a Canadian squadron – and its new and destructive weapon. Yorktown, Singapore, the 1842 retreat from Kabul and Isandlwana are perhaps Britain's greatest military disasters. Of them, Isandlwana stands out as the most staggering, with some 1,500 rifle-armed men backed by artillery wiped out by a largely spear-armed foe. However, it should have been avoidable, especially considering the British had been humbled by Africa's indigenous warriors 30 years before. Gerry van Tonder unpicks the fate of a British column on the road from Burnshill. To many, Cy Grant will be familiar as a Guianan film and TV actor from the 1950s to the 1980s, but in World War Two he was one of the RAF's few West Indian officers. Unfortunately, he also became a POW and therefore a curiosity to the Germans. Greg Quinn OBE, former British High Commissioner to Guyana, shares Cy's incredible story.

Plus

News, Lord Ashcroft's Hero of the Month, reviews and more

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